MONTEREY NEWS

April 2021
Est. 1970 Vol. LI · Number 4

Pick up at: the library (in and outside), outside town hall, transfer station

Select board candidates Susan Cooper (with Jester) and Justin Makuc.

Finance committee candidates Katrina Fitzpatrick and Rebecca Wolin.

Town Meeting

Saturday, May 1, at 9:30 a.m., firehouse pavilion

Town Meeting Information - Budget notes, proposals, bylaws, and considerations. pages 2 through 11.

Town Elections

Tuesday, May 4, noon to 7 p.m., at town hall

Candidates list page 11
Candidates statements pages 11 to 14
Letters of endorsements pages 15 to 16

"Free cash." The use of the word "free" is a bit deceiving as it is not free, and certification is not guaranteed.

Town Administrator Notes page 2

In lieu of holding an in-person forum this year, I have opted for posing questions for written responses.

Candidate Forum pages 16 to 20

The Monterey Council on Aging is accepting resumes for one or two part-time, temporary outreach workers

Outreach worker page 23

Two additional kayak racks will be installed by the highway department to bring the total to sixty available storage berths.

Parks Commission News page 24

I first heard about the power of native plants to regenerate ecosystems, nurture birds, bees and butterflies, and grow well in local conditions from Bridghe McCracken.

Build Biodiversity in Monterey page 26

Michael leapt to the challenge, and "realized a teapot is a lot of fun to make!" That was the beginning of the Banner holloware specialty.

Knox Gallery page 24

However, if you have preregistered with the state, another path opens up as well, if you don't mind going to Springfield.

A New Path to Vaccination page 25

There's not a single report on a meeting of the select board that doesn't devolve into personal accusations.

Unseemly Bickering page 25

Paul DePreter wrote to say the Bluebirds were checking out his boxes. Two weeks later Paul DePreter wrote, "Bluebirds at the boxes with a sense of purpose!!!"

Wildlife page 30

We recently found out about plans to move the NMC's fourth grade class to Undermountain School in Sheffield. This decision is being made without parent and staff input.

4th Grade Moving to Sheffield page 3

Town Administrator Notes

Budget

Saturday, May 1, at 9:30 a.m., at the firehouse pavilion, the town will hold its annual town meeting to vote on department requests for FY2022 (July 1 through June 30, 2022). Everyone involved in the budgeting process has been diligent in creating the most responsible budget that continues to offer residents the services necessary to operate the town.

One thing you may hear conversations about is "free cash." The use of the word "free" is a bit deceiving as it is not free, and certification is not guaranteed. The Division of Local Services defines free cash as "a revenue source that requires appropriation by majority vote of the community's legislative body for expenditure. It is unrestricted in its use and can generally be described as surplus accumulated from prior fiscal year's operations." Free cash may be appropriated to purchase one-time capital items or to support or balance the budget.

A trend of decreasing free cash could indicate tight budgeting, too many uncollected property taxes, and transfers to another reserve account, or a combination of these items. Items that typically make up a town's free cash for the year are: turnbacks (unspent monies from the previous year's budget), excess local receipts, change in tax receivables, previous year's unused free cash, less deficits from the previous fiscal year, and other miscellaneous items. 62% of our certified free cash for this year's town meeting came from turnbacks from FY2020. Some might think this is due to inflated budget requests, but this is not the case. I'd like to break it down for you. Our certified free cash right now is $524,270; the town used $233,855 at the special town meeting in October, leaving $290,415 for the May annual town meeting. $323,000 of our free cash came from turnbacks from FY2020 as follows:

$74,983.56 from snow and ice operations as the winter was not as bad (2019 to 2020) as it could have been. Will we be this lucky every year? Not likely.

$110,000 in vacant or unfilled positions and benefits—town administrator, highway member 3, and the part-time, planning board clerk without benefits.

There was roughly another $100,000 or more that various departments were unable to use due to the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions set by the Governor.

That leaves approximately $38,000 that was possibly over-budgeted. Believe me when I say that all department heads are mindful of how their requests impact the taxpayers and they work with the finance committee and select board to compromise and agree on the final numbers which you see in May. If a department is asking for a new piece of equipment or another staff member, more operating hours, etc., it has been discussed and researched in earnest. Monterey's estimated excess levy (the cushion between the anticipated money to be raised through taxes and the limit that would trigger Proposition 2 1/2%) is $793,872.33 (estimated due to the fact that as of the writing of this article the FY22 budget had still not been finalized) and the proposed budget is a 0.84% increase—well below the 3.5% increase the finance committee asked us to stay at or below.

The warrant and proposed budget should be available for viewing around the middle of April and will be posted on the town website in the "About" section under "Warrants" as soon as it is signed.

Respectfully,

—Melissa Noe, Town Administrator

Monterey Community Center

Outdoor Lighting Proposal

While the community center has been mostly closed during the past year, MCC coordinator, Mary Makuc, and the committee responsible for running the facility have been hard at work to make the center safe for everyone once we are able to gather again. The outdoor lighting at the MCC has been a problem for some time. In 2018, a year after the center was renovated and ready for opening, the town installed floodlights in the parking lot which seemed to be adequate. However, it soon became clear they were not. The lights only covered certain areas of the parking lot and provided almost nothing for the walkway leading to and from the building. In addition, the lights were so bright and positioned in such a way that the neighbors were assaulted by the glare. Several attempts to remedy this, such as repositioning the fixtures, did little to solve either problem. In the meantime, several people fell while coming into and out of the building and there was a near miss between a vehicle and a pedestrian. Prior to the pandemic, the community center was being used four nights a week. Now, as we are on the cusp of reopening, the lights have failed altogether and it is pitch black outside the community center at night. Clearly, something needs to be done.

The process started during the past year with a consult from environmental lighting specialist, Nancy Tomasovich, who donated her time to give us some ideas of what would be needed to provide adequate lighting. When she was no longer available to help with the project, we reached out to Rob Hoogs, who had

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recently retired from Foresight Land Services, the company that provided lighting consultations for the Hampton Price Center at Gould Farm and for some of the lighting at the Monterey Library. Rob also generously donated his time to come up with a variety of possible plans from the ideal to the more economical.

The final plan that Rob proposed meets all of the design criteria, most importantly by providing safe, uniform light along all the pedestrian routes. Uniformity of lighting becomes more important as people age and their eyes cannot adjust as easily between well and poorly lit areas. In addition, the plan is "dark sky" compliant, would have downward-facing lights that are not visible to the neighbors, use economical LED fixtures, and provide "warm" lighting. This plan would replace the wooden poles with steel ones and includes controls that would allow the lights to be on only when there is a program at the community center. It also includes hiring a lighting engineer to make sure everything is done right, ensuring a lighting solution that would last at least twenty years.

Naturally, a plan this perfect comes at a price and Rob has estimated that it will cost the town approximately $29,000. The Monterey Community Center committee has unanimously voted to accept this plan and to go forward with putting an article on the warrant for town meeting. At their March 17 meeting, the select board voted to endorse this plan, using funds from the stabilization account.

So now it is up to the voters. On the warrant for town meeting, you will see an article asking for $29,000 to fund the lighting project at the Monterey Community Center, which will hopefully come from the stabilization fund. Remember that the community center is the property of the Town of Monterey, and it is the responsibility of the town to maintain it. Please cast your vote for providing safe and environmentally responsible lighting for the MCC so we can all enjoy this wonderful place again both in the daytime and at night. Your safety is worth the expense.

—Laurie Shaw, Chair
Monterey Community Center committee

Fourth Grade Leaving New Marlborough School?

My name is Laura Rodriguez. I've lived in Monterey next door to my parents Pat and Julio Rodriguez for four years with my now eight-year-old daughter.

It is an absolute delight to send my child to the New Marlborough Central School. NMC has provided us with the tight-knit community of parents and staff to ground ourselves, connect our children, and build roots.

We recently found out about plans to move the NMC's fourth grade class to Undermountain School in Sheffield. This decision is being made without parent and staff input. It's very similar to steps that led to the closure of the Monterey School. If we let this go uncontested, it could pave the way for the New Marlborough Central school, an absolute gem, to be closed in the next few years.

Recent attempts to set a time with the superintendent have resulted in assurances that we will eventually meet, but this issue is time-sensitive given upcoming town meetings to approve the proposed school budget for the next school year.

Please help:

•Join our online community of people concerned about this possible change. Go to chng.it/WZjtjNtQ6m to read a statement and show support. (URL is not case sensitive.)

•Sign and share the petition posted on my personal Facebook page and on other community pages.

•Join a discussion over the school budget at town meeting if dialogue with the superintendent does not come to fruition.

•Please contact me for more information or a direct link to the petition.

Thanks for reading this and happy spring.

—Laura Rodriguez, (917) 753-9884
Lollarossafoods@gmail.com

Finance Committee
Annual Informational Meeting

The Monterey Finance Committee will hold its annual informational meeting on the fiscal year 2022 budget on Saturday, April 24, at 11 a.m. This meeting will be held remotely on Zoom.

We encourage all Monterey residents to attend this meeting to discuss the recommendations of the finance committee for this year's budget, to learn about the state of town finances, and to ask questions and offer comments.

You can find the Zoom link and call-in phone numbers on the town website, montereyma.gov, under the "Finance Committee" tab, or just go to montereyma.gov/finance-committee/events/18931.

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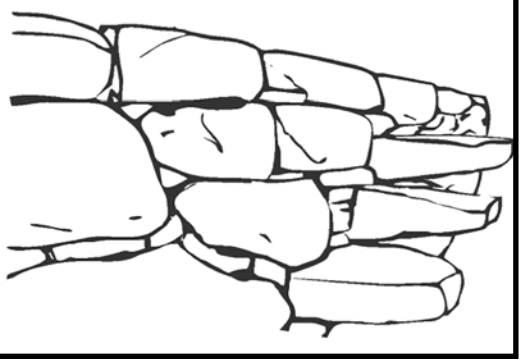

Fire Department
Proposed FY22 Budget

Over the last few months you may have read minutes from the finance committee meetings expressing concern over the fire department's budget proposal for FY22. I'd like to take the time to provide the voters with more information.

The new compensation program (what we are calling the duty-shift program) consists of the following:

• $20,000 for calls responded to during daytime hours of (5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.), Sunday through Saturday. (This is estimated at an average six members per call times $50/call for an estimated 67 calls/year.)

• $87,600 for the on-duty officers' nighttime hours of (5:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m.), Sunday through Saturday. This shift consists of three members: two staying at the station and earning a flat $100/shift, and one officer from home at $40/shift.

• $9,600 for training (twenty members x $40/member for twelve months)

Having a predetermined number of personnel at the station during the evening hours who are able to properly assess any situation that comes in, and then determine the amount of personnel needed to maintain an effective force is a plus. These smaller nightly groups have also allowed more focus to be placed on one-on-one training to hone in on each member's skillset and to address areas that may need more attention. Response time has been reduced, and call-outs for additional personnel on scene are appropriate to the situational requirements (versus the older practice of a general call-out every time.) While on scene the feel at a call through this new approach has been more calm and focused which in turn creates a more stable scene. The dedication of the department personnel through this different way of doing things has been inspiring.

This program has also increased morale dramatically and stronger bonds have been created with the new model as members have been able to get to know one another more on the shift nights (which is always rotating; one member is not always working with the same group). Training has become more personal and individualized, allowing for the officers in charge to really understand and hone each member's strengths and skills, and to work on areas that need improvement. In the old model of weekly full-department trainings, quiet, less outgoing members did not get the attention they deserved. Members have taken more ownership over the building and equipment as each shift has assigned responsibilities for both building cleaning and equipment maintenance.

The most important result of this program is that response time during the evening duty shifts has been reduced by 2.81 minutes. This is critical when responding to a fire or medical emergency. (Minutes count, seconds count.)

Monterey was very fortunate this current year to have been approved through FEMA and the CARES Act to have had the duty shift program and associated training program paid for 100%.

New for FY22— we have added $2,000 to begin replacing the worn Class A and B uniforms. The town bylaw accepted on February 16, 1968 allows the town to appropriate money for the purchase of uniforms for members of the police and fire departments.

Capital Expenses

On January 20, the select board approved the hiring of a grant writer from North Adams who specializes in (and has been very successful in the past) writing the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) program for the Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) gear needed this year. Unfortunately, the grant award announcements will occur after town meeting, so we have only put in the $10,000 town portion. If we are unsuccessful in obtaining the grant, a special town meeting will be necessary to approve the remaining $113,000.

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441 Main Road
P.O. Box 61
Monterey, MA 01245
413-429-4888
berkshiregeotech@gmail.com

Airpacks Information

A little information on SCBAs (airpacks), and why ours must be replaced this year. The airpack apparatus is upgraded by NFPA/Niosh and OSHA regulations on a six-year cycle, so apparatus has a compliance date on it (same for all fire departments). In 2013 the fire department proposed to be on an all-at-one-time replacement schedule versus half-now, half-later. The old replacement schedule had the firemen wearing two completely different sets of SCBA which is not safe. When the upgrades were made to half the apparatus, the attachments, such as the face pieces, etc., are no longer interchangeable. So for training and safety purposes half the department has one style and the other half another style, which could translate into losing valuable time in an emergency, or worse, someone could be hurt/killed. Having two different styles also requires more training as each firefighter has to be trained on both (buttons, valves, etc. could be in completely different spots). Airpacks and bottles must be from the same manufacturer and aren't interchangeable, which is another supporting reason why all of the sets should be replaced at the same time.

With all that explained, the packs purchased in 2009 for $42,000 and the packs purchased in 2013 for $45,500 all have the 2007 compliance date. When the fire department purchased the newer set they could've purchased the upgraded (then current) model. However, as explained, this would just perpetuate the problem outlined above. So to get everyone using the same equipment, and to be on the same replacement schedule, the 2007 model was purchased. All of the apparatus is now out of compliance this year. When replaced this year the new packs will have a 2019 date as that is the newest compliant model available. It is still a fifteen-year replacement schedule. In the future, when we purchase, we will always be purchasing a model which has a compliant date that may be two years old, as the new ones to come out still have four more years before they are available.

Comparing Fire Department Budgets

You may also hear arguments that our fire department has one of the most expensive budgets around. We ask that you keep in mind that the departments we are being compared to may be buying old equipment versus new (Tyringham, for example). National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines require that front-line apparatus must be retired once it is twenty-five years old. Also, some of the departments we are compared to are public departments where the buildings are owned by the town and they do not lease the building as Monterey does. The number of calls to which these departments respond, and whether they respond to as many medical calls as Monterey does in an average year should also be considered. Monterey is very fortunate to not have an issue with firefighter recruitment and retention as many other towns around us do.

And finally—the fire company would like to assure the residents that we have been compliant (although maybe a bit tardy) in filing all the required documents that a non-profit charity must file. We have been using a professional accountant (recommended by our finance committee) for the last three years. Any lingering concerns that the finance committee has with regard to our non-profit status or relationship with the town, we assure you will be addressed.

Respectfully,

—Shawn Tryon, Fire Chief
President, Monterey Fire Company

Letters

Beartown Mt. Rd. Help

On Friday evening, March 12, at 8 p.m., I went off the road on Beartown Mountain Road, due to the deep, almost impassable muddy ruts in the road.

My wife Arrie and I were very concerned as muddy water was making its way into the passenger side of the vehicle. Fortunately Monterey police officer Shawn Courtney responded after I called 911, and Rodney Loring, from A & M Towing in Sandisfield responded after I called AAA. Rodney pulled me out of the ditch, Shawn stayed at the scene and drove us home. Thankfully no one was injured. We are very grateful to have been helped in such dire circumstances by Shawn and Rodney. I'm also grateful to those who worked tirelessly over so many years to get the cell tower on Chestnut Hill. Don't know how this incident would have turned out in the pre-cellphone era.

—Edwin Salsitz

In My View
Emergency Select Board Meeting

On Thursday, March 18, the select board sat in emergency session as requested by Shawn Tryon, to address a crisis created by two members of the finance committee: Jon Sylbert and Rebecca Wolin. More than twenty-five residents participated online. The ninety-minute meeting ended with the adoption of a motion. Many attendees participated in its drafting, and no one spoke against it. Steven and I voted for it (John Weingold was not present). *(The motion is not available on the town website. For a copy, email MontereyNews9@gmail.com with subject line "Motion.")*

Jon Sylbert and Rebecca Wolin laid the groundwork for this crisis over many months by their constantly repeated and increasingly slanderous public attacks on the integrity of the Monterey Fire Company and on the chief of the fire department, Shawn Tryon. Their claims fell into two categories; first that the fire company was not in compliance with filings required by the Commonwealth for maintenance of its nonprofit status and by the town for charitable institutions to retain their local real estate tax exemption, and second, that there had been illegal or improper handling of monies given by the town budget to the fire department and the fire company for operating and capital expenses.

Over the months, the town and the fire company were deluged with document and informational demands, all on subjects completely outside the role of the finance committee, and with charges of illegality. Nevertheless, Melissa, the accountant, and Shawn provided full answers that would have satisfied any reasonable person acting in good faith. Yet, always unsatisfied, Jon and Rebecca continued to demand and threaten that they would seek, among other things, enforcement action from the Commonwealth and federal government. They also have made the false accusation over and over again that conduct by Shawn and the fire company was somehow placing the town in financial and legal jeopardy.

On March 3, they extended their claims, charging that the Monterey Board of Assessors has broken the law for at least ten years by granting the Monterey Fire Company, Ltd., tax exemption [from the payment of real estate taxes] without filings or proper filings. And they asserted falsely and publicly that this would harm the taxpayers or had harmed them by depriving them of the benefit of real estate tax payments that should and would have been made by the fire company had the Board of Assessors been doing its job correctly.

It is important that you understand just how wrong that claim is. Suppose the fire company forgot to file a real estate tax exemption form or filed the wrong form. And suppose the Board of Assessors responded by removing the tax exemption. So now, according to Sylbert and Wolin, taxes would be due the town on over a million dollars' worth of property. But there is no personal liability for such taxes. If they aren't paid, the only option the town has is to foreclose on the property and put the tax lien up for public sale. Monterey would own the property, but we couldn't really consider selling it to redeem the taxes because then there would be no place to store our firefighting trucks and equipment and no headquarters for our fire department.

As already noted, Sylbert and Wolin have also been claiming that the fire company's filings with the secretary of the Commonwealth are so deficient that it is in danger of losing its non-profit status, causing—according to them—great harm to the town. Suppose that happened. The fire company would immediately be dissolved, but if the firefighters were willing, the institution could continue as the Monterey Fire Department. What would happen to its property is governed by its articles of organization, a public document filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth, which provides that "[u]pon the dissolution of the corporation, the Board of Directors shall . . . dispose of all the assets of the corporation . . . by transfer to the Town of Monterey . . . ." In short, Monterey would own the property, which in effect is the situation now.

What Sylbert and Wolin cannot seem to grasp is that given the context of the fire company/town relationship, the filing of forms in question has no financial or legal impact on Monterey or its taxpayers, now or in the future.

In the March 3 finance committee memorandum referred to above, Sylbert and Wolin took the firm position that they would oppose placing $30,000 in the town budget for capital improvements at the firehouse and would maintain that opposition until the fire company satisfied them that all charitable organization annual filings were in order. That stance is precisely opposite a former pledge, in which they joined, assuring the fire company that the

Due to health, safety and staffing during the pandemic,
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We can't wait to serve you again. We will also be bringing back the Gould Farm Market so you can purchase all of your Harvest Barn goodies as well. Until then, please stay safe and well. We so appreciate your business and support and we look forward to seeing all of your faces.

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town would do its best to allocate $30,000 a year for capital improvements at the firehouse. An enormous amount of capital investment will be needed for the firehouse to function adequately in the coming years. This threat to renege now on the town's promise to provide a program of continued capital improvement has undercut morale at the fire company, as have the continued attacks on Mr. Tryon.

During this period of public attacks, Jon Sylbert added flames to the fire by filing a totally false criminal complaint against Shawn Tryon with Chief of Police Gareth Backhaus. Sylbert charged that almost a year ago Tryon had assaulted George Cain, who was then chair of the finance committee. Chief Backhaus investigated the matter and confirmed that the alleged victim, George Cain, denied that an assault had occurred, a point supported by Kenn Basler, who was an eyewitness. When Chief Backhaus informed Sylbert that there was no basis for his charge, Sylbert wrote back, asking where else he could file it. Tryon learned immediately about this continuing threat. And in his opening statement at the emergency select board meeting, he contended that Sylbert was pursuing a personal vendetta against him. The filing of this outrageous complaint by Sylbert provides strong evidence of the validity of Tryon's belief. It is also good reason to expect Sylbert to recuse himself from weighing in on any issues related to Tryon, the fire company, the fire department, and the highway department.

On Wednesday, March 17, things came to a head when the finance committee met. The only listed agenda item was budget discussion. Nevertheless, Sylbert and Wolin, acting entirely without the participation of Michele Miller, the third member of the finance committee, announced that they would continue in executive session. Massachusetts Open Meeting Law lists ten purposes for which an executive session can be called. Wolin expressly chose number 5 and Sylbert agreed. Number 5 reads: "To investigate charges of criminal misconduct or to consider the filing of criminal complaints." Tryon was watching online and drew the reasonable inference that he was again about to be threatened with the filing of a false criminal complaint.

Without a show of community support for Tryon, I had good reason to believe he might resign immediately both as Fire Chief and Director of Operations. To prevent that possibility, I called the emergency meeting of the select board for the next morning. Adoption of the motion was an important first step, as was the broad, heartfelt, and uniform support that Tryon received from the many residents who participated in the meeting and helped draft the motion. But this crisis is not yet over. Sylbert and Wolin have gravely harmed the morale of the fire company. It is time for us as a community to speak out. Let's show that we will not tolerate harassment, false accusation, and character assassination directed at either Shawn Tryon individually or at the members of the Monterey Fire Company.

This Year's Town Meeting

This year's annual town meeting will require the resolution of many important issues. The meeting will probably take place at the firehouse pavilion on May 1, and Covid-19 protective measures will be in place. However, I think for the first time in our town's history, we may need two days to address all the issues.

A second day may be required, not because of any decision by the select board but due to the actions of one member of the select board, John Weingold. Acting at the last minute and without any notice to the other board members, John decided to amass citizens' petitions supporting eighteen wide-ranging bylaw amendments. Some are very long and complex, too many are not carefully drafted, and some are not sensible. But no matter the burden, no matter the quality, such petitions must be included in the warrant, even though they have the potential of adding so much time that a second meeting may be required.

However, at the town meeting you don't necessarily have to address these last minute proposals in detail and on their merits. When you finish reading them in advance of the meeting, you may conclude that asking for so many decisions by a town meeting is impractical and unwise, perhaps especially during a pandemic. Maybe the better course would be to table them. Their proponents could then ask the select board to create a committee to hold public hearings over the extended period of time necessary for their careful consideration.

—Don Coburn
Chair, Select Board

Role of the Finance Committee

Editor's Note: A bylaw is being proposed at town meeting which would designate the select board as primarily responsible for preparing the annual budget. Below is an edited version of a statement by Jon Sylbert and Rebecca Wolin arguing that it is a statutory role of the finance committee. However, the original statement is too lengthy for publication. (If any reader would like to read the full version, email MontereyNews9@gmail.com, with subject line "Budget.")

Unlike federal and state government, local government in Massachusetts towns with populations under six thousand is conducted by direct democracy. Voters decide on the budget—and, in Monterey, separately on nearly every budget item, so bring your lunch, folks—at town meeting. You are the appropriating authority.

In Monterey, both state law and our town bylaws confirm that: "A board of selectmen in a town with an elected or appointed finance committee has no statutory role in the preparation and submission of the annual budget, unless it is expressly given a role by bylaw. If not, the finance committee is responsible for preparing, submitting and distributing the budget under G.L. Ch. 39 §16 and Ch. 41 §§59 and 60." *(Editor's note: Attribution for this quote is unclear. It comes from a letter dated April 27, 1993, with neither writer nor recipient identified. Additionally, the current language in MA general law referenced above has changed, although the general meaning is the same. To read the sections, go to malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws.)*

According to the *Finance Committee Handbook*, published by the MA Municipal Association, "It is the finance committee's responsibility to receive the budgets from the executive branch (either as a collective whole or individually by department), analyze them, have hearings where the department heads and the public can testify, and present a balanced budget to town meeting. That budget should reflect the finance committee's decisions based upon their best judgment of the issues and finances of the town. If the board of selectmen or town administrator disagrees with any item, they can submit a substitute motion, as is the right of any participant at town meeting."

The reason for this is straightforward. In his preface to the *Finance Committee Handbook*, Allan Tosti, editor, sums it up nicely with these words of wisdom: "Without finance committee independent review, the town meeting would be at a severe handicap in voting on financial matters when all of the recommendations are coming from one source. Separation of powers was designed by our founding fathers for a reason—Defend It."

(Wolin and Sylbert then provide a lengthy recitation of recent political events at various select board meetings and discussion around the authors of the warrant. If this bylaw question concerns you, then please request a full copy.)

Mr. Coburn and Mr. Weisz are proposing a form of government in which there is a concentration of power—specifically to themselves as select board members—not a separation of powers. They have refused repeatedly to abide by the law, and are now proposing an amendment to our bylaws that would invest all final authority in themselves as select board members.

This is not in the best interests of our voters, our larger community of residents and taxpayers, our town, and our financial health. You deserve independent citizen representation on all financial matters coming before the town, and we agree with Alan Tosti that the "separation of powers was designed by our founding fathers for a reason."

All powers conferred to voters—the power to legislate, the power to appropriate, the power to determine the format of the budget—are your powers and yours alone, and all of us who work or volunteer our time to make town government work for you—employees and appointed and elected officials—serve at your pleasure.

As always, the decision about the role of the finance committee—like all decisions pertaining to town governance—are made by voters at town meeting. This year, town meeting is on Saturday, May 1, at 9 a.m. Please attend town meeting and vote your conscience. Be heard. Be effective. Be self-determined. It's up to you.

If you don't defend your independent, elected, citizen finance committee, you will lose it, and the select board—whoever its members may be—will have sole control of the entire budget.

Also, remember that the question before us all at town meeting is not whether we want Rebecca Wolin or Jonathan Sylbert or Michele Miller of the finance committee recommending the budget to town meeting, or Don Coburn or Steve Weisz or John Weingold of the select board. Elected officials come and go. The question is whether we want one board having complete authority over the budget, or prefer separate and decentralized elected bodies fulfilling distinct but complimentary roles on our behalf.

Finally, of immediate concern is this: Don Coburn and Steve Weisz are refusing to put the finance committee's FY22 budget recommendation on this year's warrant. John Weingold is in favor of honoring the finance committee's statutory role.

Please contact your select board with your opinion on these matters.

Monterey Finance Committee
—Rebecca Wolin, Chair,
Jonathan Sylbert

Please note: the decision to submit this article to the Monterey News for publication was voted on by the finance committee at a legally posted meeting on March 19, 2021. The vote was Rebecca Wolin and Jonathan Sylbert in favor; Michele Miller was not present at the meeting.

Budget Creation
A Cooperative View

The select board and the finance committee are at odds about who should have the greater control over the budget.

The select board argues that since the formation of the finance committee in 1959, the select board has traditionally had the lead role until very recently.

The finance committee argues that state law, and the town bylaws, give the finance committee the sole authority, and cites sources to back this contention.

A different, more cooperative, view of the roles of these two boards in the budget process can be found in the Massachusetts Division of Local Services' *A Guide to Financial Management for Town Officials*. (The DLS is a division of the department of revenue. Go to mass.gov, search by the title for the guide.)

—Stephen Moore

Section 3.1
Selectmen should play an active and strong role in the financial management of the town.

A major role of the selectmen should be to coordinate the roles of all players in the financial management process and to promote a team approach for addressing the fiscal issues of the town. Selectmen should participate in the budget process, directly reviewing budget requests and having input at all levels of the process. They should provide leadership in the development of a capital improvement program and a risk management policy (i.e., insurance). Throughout the fiscal year, the selectmen (in conjunction with the finance committee), should monitor the financial performance of the town. Finally, selectmen should assume an active role in any issue or policy that has broad implications for the financial condition of the town, including such issues as tax classification, free cash policy, use of a stabilization fund, financial reporting and the audit process.

Section 3.3:
What Role should the Selectman Play in the Budget Process?

As the chief executive body of the town, selectmen develop and implement policy.

It is important that they develop consistent budget guidelines, at the same time taking into consideration the available financial resources of the municipality. Because the budget is probably the single most important policy document a town develops each year, participation by the selectmen is essential to their maintaining a leadership role in the town. The selectmen should have input concerning the budget's format; they should review all budget requests and develop a good understanding of the finance committee's position on the budget. The selectmen, in cooperation with the finance committee, should also establish policy priorities and provide leadership in the constant debate between the needs of municipal departments (for sufficient resources to deliver public services) and the needs of the taxpayers (to receive adequate services at a cost they can afford).

Section 3.6:
What Opportunities Exist for the Selectmen and the Finance Committee to Work Jointly?

There are many opportunities for cooperation between the board of selectmen and the finance committee, including the following: developing financial forecasts, establishing an appropriate budget and capital planning process, developing joint guidelines by which departmental requests will be reviewed, joint budget hearings with department heads and policies regarding the use of free cash and the stabilization fund. In addition, the selectmen with the approval of the finance committee may make some budget transfers during the last two months of the fiscal year and first 15 days of the next year in order to close out the town's financial records.

It makes sense for the two bodies to work together closely. By agreeing on processes and procedures ahead of time, both boards will save time and can avoid disagreements during the budget process.

Section 5.2
What Role Does the Finance Committee Play in the Budget Process?

The finance committee is primarily responsible for submitting its recommendations on the annual budget to the town meeting. In assuming this responsibility, the committee influences the entire budgetary process. The committee is also commonly involved in the budget preparation, which involves the development of budget forms and, in many communities, the establishment of budgetary guidelines for department heads. Once departmental budget requests are submitted, the committee reviews them all and makes recommendations on the requests to town meeting. Prior to town meeting, the finance committee often conducts budget hearings to allow more extensive review of the budget.

Budget Roles
Recent Monterey History

The question of who develops the budget is based partly in how the town functioned in the past, and how town government reflects state laws. I thought it might be instructive to look at Jon Sylbert's years on the select board. To do this I looked through back issues of the *Monterey News* for reporting on town meetings and budget meetings.

Sylbert was elected to four consecutive terms on the select board, serving for eleven years, from June 2002 through February 2012. He served as chair of the select board several times.

A review of the reporting of town meetings during those years indicates that the select board took the lead in presenting the budget, and explaining and defending certain proposed spending. The finance committee also spoke to questions and issues as they arose during town meetings.

Reporting on budget meetings was less definitive as it was clear that the select board and the finance committee, while they may have had numerous differences, met regularly, and it seems mostly cooperatively, to consider spending requests and alternatives for the management of town business. In a few instances the reporting pointed to a stronger role by the finance committee in considering how the budget would be financed, e.g. the role and level of stabilization, use of free cash, the overall levy, etc.

The picture I gained from this research is that neither board insisted on primacy when developing the budget regardless of state statutes. Folks who were active in town affairs during those years might have other perspectives on the process.

—Stephen Moore

Letters
Finance Committee Minutes

At a select board meeting on Wednesday, March 17, an issue arose that might be important to keep in mind on election day in May.

I would like to stress, lest anyone be confused, that these comments are mine, as an interested citizen, and should not be construed to be an editorial statement of the Monterey News. *I would like to add that the* News *is available to anyone in Monterey to express their opinions about matters of public interest.*

At that March 17 meeting there was discussion over a conflict concerning the lack of minutes of finance committee meetings. The select board apparently has been asking the finance committee for minutes for quite a while, and was at the point of considering filing a formal complaint for the lack of minutes. They decided to ask one more time (at a previous meeting they'd come to the same decision, to try one more time) before actually filing a complaint, which they felt would do little good anyway.

So I took a look at the town website the next day. From this past October 1 to March 1, the finance committee has listed agendas for twenty-two meetings. The committee's webpage shows minutes for only three of those meetings, the most recent one for a January 6 meeting. There were ten meetings with posted agendas from January 13 to March 1 without any minutes posted.

Part of the discussion at that select board meeting around the filing of minutes concerned the proper procedure. The select board and the town administrator said that agendas are to be filed with the town clerk, and the minutes are to be filed with the administrator so they can be added to the town website. The finance committee, and specifically the chair, Rebecca Wolin, reportedly insists that filing the minutes with only the town clerk is sufficient.

So I contacted town clerk Terry Walker to ask her how many meeting minutes she has on file during that same period from October 1 through March 1. She replied that she has minutes for only five meetings, the most recent minutes for January 6.

This means that the finance committee has filed minutes for only five of twenty-two listed meetings during that five-month period, and none since January 6—when they were presumably discussing the budget appropriations. And of the five minutes that were filed, only three made it to the public via the website. (Since the 2020 elections: twenty-nine posted meetings; minutes on the website—only nine.)

As I understand it, the minutes of public meetings serve two functions. One is a permanent record of what was discussed, who participated, the documents considered, and what decisions were made, which along with the agenda, constitute the formal actions of a committee. The second purpose is to inform the public just what has been done on its behalf.

In other words, to use a well-worn analogy, the public cannot see "how the sausage was being made" during the finance committee's budget preparations this year. The public cannot see what has been considered, who attended the meetings, what documents were examined, and what decisions or recommendations were made. No one (who wasn't present)… not select board members, not the administrator, not the general public, knows what transpired at those meetings.

I am not a lawyer, and I am not versed in the open meeting law requirements, but I would say there must be some serious delinquencies in the finance committee's open meeting law reporting requirements. From mass.gov, the requirement to file meeting minutes is: "Public bodies must create and approve minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions, in a timely manner. A "timely manner" will generally be considered to be within the next three

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public body meetings or within 30 days, whichever is later…"

As to the issue of with whom to file the minutes, in this day and age, this is a ridiculous point to argue over. Minutes can be filed electronically by email. To file with two parties (the clerk and the administrator) means no more than a second address on the email. That's all. Any insistence that filing with only the town clerk is sufficient is to really disregard the public's interest in keeping abreast of what the finance committee, or any committee, is doing. Why is this so important? Because this is the committee that insists that producing the budget is their responsibility—and by not posting their minutes, the public has no idea as to how they reached their budget conclusions.

Filing a formal complaint would probably not yield any change in this pattern of disregard for the interests of an informed public, but the voters will have an opportunity in early May, in the voting booth, to consider the committee's irresponsible practices.

—Stephen Moore

Town Elections

Town elections will be held on Tuesday, May 4, from noon to 7 p.m., at town hall.

Candidates for offices can be nominated independently by collecting signatures (I), or by receiving a nomination from either the Democratic (D) or Republican (R) party caucuses. *- Incumbents.

Contested Seats

Finance Committee (3 years)
Katrina Fitzpatrick (I)
Rebecca Wolin (D & R)

Library Trustee (3 years, vote for 2)
Ann Canning* (D & R)
Ron Nelson (I)
Cheryl Zellman (D & R)

Select Board (3 years)
Susan Cooper (D)
Justin Makuc (R)

Uncontested Seats

Board of Appeals (Zoning) (5 years)
Chip Allen (R)

Board of Assessors (3 year)
Teresa Steibel (I, R & D)

Board of Health (3 years)
Roy Carwile* (R)

Cemetery Commission (3 years)
Linda Thorpe* (R & D)

Moderator (1 year)
Mark Makuc* (D & R)

Parks Commission (3 years, vote for 2)
Tracy Brennan (R)
Thomas Mensi (R)

Parks Commission (1 year)
No nominee

Planning Board (5 years)
Chip Allen (D)

Planning Board (4 years)
No nominee

Tree Warden (1 year)
Kevin Fitzpatrick* (R)

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Candidate Statements

Terri Steibel

Board of Assessors Candidate

My name is Terri Steibel and I live on Swann Road with my husband Scott and our two dogs. I am running for the open seat on the town's Board of Assessors. I filed for an independent nomination, but also earned the support of both the Republican and Democratic caucuses for nomination.

I have recently retired from a forty-five-year career as a commercial insurance broker in New York. I feel this is the perfect time for me to get involved and contribute to the town and my neighbors. Additionally, I am looking forward to the challenge of learning a new body of knowledge as well.

If I can answer any questions or provide additional information about myself, I am available and can be reached by phone at (516) 946-4417, or by email at teresasteibel@gmail.com.

—Terri Steibel

Ron Nelson
Library Trustee Candidate

My name is Ron Nelson, and I am standing for election to the Monterey Library Board of Trustees. My father was a long-time trustee of the Richard Salter Storrs Library in Longmeadow, MA, where I grew up. He helped me to develop a life-long love of libraries and how to use them. I believe that libraries are one of our essential institutions for an enlightened culture, society, and civilization. I also believe they need all the help they can get to retain their critically important place in our community life. The limitations placed on libraries by Covid-19 have underscored how we take libraries for granted as the "great good" in our lives.

I graduated from Duke University on a Navy scholarship and spent three years on active duty on aircraft carriers and shore assignments. I spent my forty-year civilian career in writing and management, first in the advertising agency business, and then as an executive speech writer for General Electric and IBM. I also served in the public sector as information officer for the initial 1960s government study of the resources of and pressures upon Long Island Sound: "The Urban Sea."

As a volunteer, I have served on the board of Trickle Up, making small business grants to the world's poorest of the poor. I co-founded an organization of consultants and health providers to bring spirit to the workplace, now in its twenty-seventh year. As a resident of Greenwich, CT, I served as president of the Greenwich Forum, an organization founded by Thomas Watson, Jr., and Barbara Tuchman, the historian and author, to bring outstanding speakers on domestic and world affairs to Greenwich. As a resident of Monterey, CA, I served on the board and various committees of the World Affairs Council of Monterey Bay. I served as treasurer and board member of the International Human Learning Resources Network, an international organization to further the family therapy teachings and work of Virginia Satir. Currently I serve on the Monterey Historic District Committee, and as a Duke alumnus I interview area students each year who have applied for admission to Duke, as well as counsel current students.

I read a lot of history, political and geopolitical theory and practice, economic theory and practice, and other interesting non-fiction and, of course, spy thrillers. Needless to say, I am a big fan and user of the Monterey Library, where it would be my honor and pleasure to serve as trustee and supporter of librarian Mark Makuc and his staff.

—Ron Nelson

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Ann Canning
Library Trustee Candidate

In May, I will complete my first term as a trustee on the Monterey Library Board and am seeking re-election to that position for another term.

I have been a full-time resident of Monterey for nine years and a second-home owner for a decade prior to that. My involvement with the library began long before I joined the board—as a patron, member of the Friends, annual book sale bargain hunter, and long-time participant in the adult book group.

During the past three years, together with my fellow board members and the library director, I saw the library through some of the greatest milestones in its history, including the building project, the temporary re-location of the library (twice), the grand opening of our beautifully renovated library, and the many issues posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In my second year, I was elected chairperson and acquired further knowledge as I consulted with Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to guide us on unprecedented matters.

As you weigh how you will cast your ballot, please consider the continuity and experience I bring in returning to the board for a second term. The library is one of the town's most significant assets, as evidenced in our investment in making it an expanded, state-of-the-art facility that offers access to all.

I would be grateful for your support in allowing me to continue to serve as a trustee on the board and help forward the library's important mission in our community.

— Ann Canning

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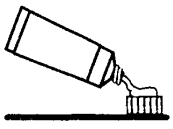

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Rebecca Wolin
Finance Committee Candidate

I would like to thank both the Democratic and Republican caucuses for nominating me for a second term on the finance committee. I am asking Monterey residents, when they go to the polls in May, to reelect me to a second term.

I have been a Monterey resident for almost six years after owning property here for over fifteen years. My daughter lives locally in Stockbridge and my son is currently living in Berkley and is a football coach for their football team, the UC Cal Bears. I have my undergraduate degree in accounting from the University of NH and my graduate degree from the University of MA. I worked in a public accounting firm after college where I started my career, and worked in corporate accounting, owned my own business, and now I work at a nonprofit, and also volunteer my time to the finance committees of two other nonprofits in the Berkshires. I am a lifelong Girl Scout starting as a Brownie and ending as a troop leader and treasurer of the Westport Girl Scout Council.

The finance committee is an independently elected body whose members should be knowledgeable about budgeting, finance, accounting, and planning. I have been doing this for over forty years. I understand the need to spend within our means and not put the town into uncontrollable debt with overspending and borrowing. We need to be smart about what we spend our money on in order to keep property taxes from increasing at enormous rates.

As a finance committee member I am totally independent. I am not an employee of the town of Monterey, nor am I related to anyone who is an employee of the town of Monterey.

The finance committee is Monterey's checks and balances when it comes to the money spent by the rest of the town bodies. We are responsible for preparing and presenting the budget at town meeting, monitoring expenditures during the year to ensure your funds are being spent on what you approved at town meeting, and we can transfer funds when budget areas are overspent by a few dollars. Last year the finance committee worked very hard and we were able to reduce the property tax rate by 1.2%. This year we are working very hard to ensure your tax rate stays as close to last year's as possible.

If anyone has any personal questions for me please drop me an email (rwolin01245@gmail.com) with your questions or phone number and I will get back to you.

Respectfully,

—Rebecca Wolin

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Katrina Fitzpatrick
Finance Committee Candidate

I am running for a spot on the Monterey Finance Committee. I have been a resident of Monterey for twenty years, grew up here, went to college and returned. I am currently on the Monterey Board of Registrars, and I would like to become more involved in my town and community. Monterey is an exceptional place to live, a great place to have a family, and a wonderful place to call home. My hope is that more young adults move here to continue the small, diverse, and vibrant community we have. To continue the great flow of the town, I believe we need people who recognize the importance and history of Monterey. Going forward I believe Monterey would excel from having a long-term resident, who has new ideas and perspective for the town.

I am excited for the possibility to work with a community who has such strong support for each other and keeping this town running well. Monterey is continuously improving itself, and I feel fortunate enough to have the opportunity to help continue the growth of our town. I look forward to bringing along new ideas to the community.

I believe I am a great candidate for finance committee. I have a bachelor's degree in business and finance, I worked at a bank for four years, and am now working at a law firm as a legal assistant. I am always willing and interested in receiving additional training and knowledge to accomplish the best results within the position. If elected I would always do my absolute best to listen to the community and hear what they want and need for Monterey. My decisions will be based not only on how they impact individuals, but also on the greatest benefit for Monterey.

If you are interested in a better, more positive outlook for Monterey, please vote for me in May. Thank you!

—Katrina Fitzpatrick

Justin Makuc
Select board candidate

I have lived in Monterey with my family at 571 Main Road all of my life, save for college years spent in Worcester and Washington, D.C. I am proud to be a product of Southern Berkshire Regional School District as I attended school at Monterey, New Marlborough, Undermountain, and Mt. Everett. I was also fortunate enough to go to College of the Holy Cross where I focused on political philosophy and studied thinkers like Aristotle, Tocqueville, and Lincoln. Since I graduated from college last May, I have been working in Sandisfield and New Marlborough learning how to build and farm thanks to patient mentors. When I'm not learning in school or at work, I like to be out on Lake Garfield fishing, swimming, or sailing.

I have not been on any town boards or committees before, but I have been on the fire department for a number of years and for a short time more recently I have done some office tasks for our town clerk. My lack of prior experience in our town government means that I would need to learn a lot if I were elected, but I am prepared to commit the necessary time and energy to learn about all of the issues that come before the board. I would make it a priority to listen to and consider all relevant opinions from experienced town employees and Monterey citizens. I'd also like to think that my lack of previous experience means that I will come to the position with an open mind, willing to engage and work effectively with everyone in town.

I would try to make the best decisions that I possibly can, but I know that almost always there are opposing viewpoints with legitimate reasons. My hope, if I am elected to the select board, is that those who disagree on an issue can at least trust that I have done the appropriate learning to try to make a good decision for the Town, and that we can disagree civilly.

If you have any questions or comments, I'd like to hear from you. The best ways to reach me are justinmakuc@gmail.com, or call me at (413) 429-5854.

Thanks,

—Justin Makuc

Susan Cooper
Select Board Candidate

As a nineteen-year full-time resident of Monterey, and a regular participant in town meeting, I have been very distressed to watch our town politics become increasingly divisive. Perhaps this is a reflection of the larger world, but I feel it is a trend we will all have to strive to overcome. Thus, my sense of civic responsibility pushes me to run for select board. I believe that civil dialogue is vital in maintaining not only healthy, productive governance but thriving communities. We need to be mindful that being human, mistakes have been and will be made, and that some of our work will always be doing our best to rectify errors. We all need to listen thoughtfully with open minds to differing opinions, and strive to make considered decisions based on solid information.

My training as a scientist has honed my ability to look at data objectively and see complex problems as whole systems. Teaching college and high school, running Flying Cloud's summer science programs for girls for twelve years, starting and coaching a middle school robotics team at SBRSD, and engaging in science and math enrichment programs at many of southern Berkshire County's schools has helped me learn to communicate clearly and creatively. Serving on the Monterey Zoning Board of Appeals has given me a grounding in town politics and an opportunity to ensure that our bylaws are fairly and universally applied, while striving to help applicants to fully enjoy their property. I raised a daughter here, and know how much she values the beautiful place where she had the luck to grow up. I would like to see this town be a place our children could live, should they choose to do so.

The purpose of government is to provide the services that individuals alone cannot. We need to maintain and, mindful of the future, improve our infrastructure. That covers a lot of ground. It includes the things we always list like roads, schools, police and fire protection, along with library services and access to electricity, phone, and broadband services. But it also includes many things that make Monterey a vibrant community: beautiful lakes and a fantastic beach, a skating rink and pavilion, gorgeous hiking trails, a playground and baseball diamond, a community center, and so much more, some maintained by individuals or private groups and some by the town.

And we need to do all this with fiscal responsibility. Spending should be thoughtful and prudent, always striving to balance the risks of deferred maintenance with immediate needs. We need to meet our obligations, keeping our town fiscally sound while making sure that Monterey remains a strong and vibrant residential community, affordable for all residents.

—Susan Cooper
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Letters
Candidate Endorsements

Enough Is Enough

As we turn the corner on the virus, we are all realizing the time it will take to get back to "normal," whatever that is. The same can be said for the new low reached this year by the select board and finance committee. Threats back and forth, criminal charges pursued, conspiracies a-plenty, false narratives in search of traction, and on and on. The negativity has never been this bad and has led to poor decisions—think hiring a town administrator with no community input—by changing the town-meeting-approved half-time position and salary to a full-time position and full-time salary, no attempt to advertise for the full-time position, and on and on. Just one of many questionable decisions made this past year. On the finance side, that committee seems intent on micro-managing the fire department with a constant barrage of threats, name-calling, and drama. Enough is enough.

We have the opportunity this year to begin the process of turning the Titanic before it's too late.

Katrina Fitzpatrick-Finance Committee

The other board that is in trouble is the finance committee. For the past two years this committee has challenged the select board in a race to the bottom. It has tried to file criminal charges against our fire chief which were totally unfounded, filed open meeting law violations against the select board while, at the same time, not filing minutes of its own meetings. False narratives and conspiracy theories abound with no foundation, along with name-calling and threats. The lack of leadership on both boards is so discouraging.

Last year we took the step toward normalcy by electing Michele Miller to the committee. Unfortunately, her long community involvement and business acumen has been ignored by the other two members of the committee. She needs help and we can give her that help by electing Katrina Fitzpatrick to the open seat this year.

Katrina will bring to the finance committee a background in finance and law, along with a lifetime spent growing up in Monterey, attending local schools, majoring in business and finance in college, working at our local Lee Bank for four years, and now working at a local law firm. She is also a listener and problem solver—small towns like ours should be drawing on our professionally trained young people to help us weather the difficult issues we face. Katrina's election would immediately change the dynamics of the finance committee from the negative to the positive. It would mean we would have a finance committee that wants to work cooperatively with the select board, to find the solutions and end the negative mantra that has permeated it.

Susan Cooper-Select Board

For the select board, we have a talented, strong woman running for the open seat. Susan Cooper brings to the table the qualifications important to the times we are in. She is an educator known for her listening skills, and an ability to find solutions to complex problems. Susan has served on a variety of town boards. This has given her an understanding of the town, how it works, and, more importantly, a history of solid, productive town involvement. I am convinced she will set a new tone, not the negative, arrogant, "I know best" attitude that currently permeates both the select board and the finance committee. It will take us a few years to get back to "normal." A new time where common sense will replace arrogance and ignorance. Susan is the right person for the job and I hope you will support her candidacy.

Please join with me to vote for Susan Cooper for select board, and Katrina Fitzpatrick for finance committee.

—Kenn Basler

Letters
Candidate Endorsements

Susan Cooper-Select Board

Monterey is lucky to have two fine candidates for select board. I don't know Justin well, however I appreciate his willingness to serve the people of Monterey. I do know Susan a bit more and have worked with her in a public forum. She is very knowledgeable about town affairs and is hardworking. Susan has good ideas and a willingness to work with others, as a team. My belief is that she will make an excellent addition to the select board.

Katrina Fitzpatrick-Finance Committee

As Monterey faces new challenges, "new blood" on the finance committee is needed. Katrina's background in banking and finance will serve the public well. She is pleasant to work with and balanced in her approach to others. I look forward to working with her and learning from her. Katrina will help end the rancor, while fighting for the taxpayers of Monterey.

—Steven Weisz

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Town Elections - Letters and Candidate Forum Questions

Letters

My Candidacy for the Select Board

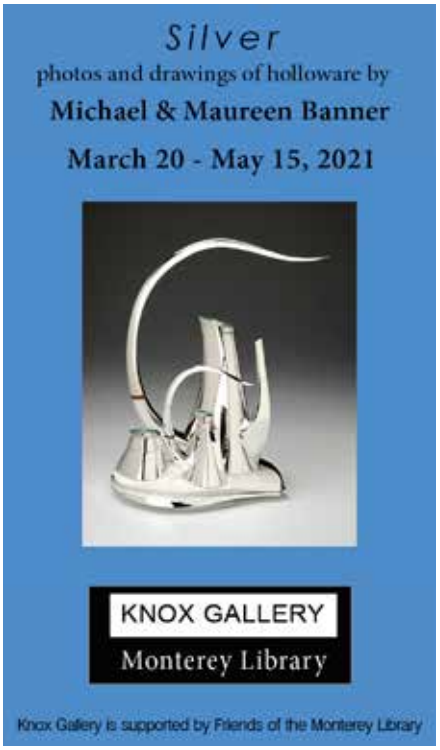
If I was to serve as your next select board member, I would sign warrants, attend weekly meetings in person, and work with my fellow board members to restore civility, respect, and understanding to town management. That is what I think my neighbors and friends in the Town of Monterey want and deserve.

When I consider who my opponents are, I realize that I am not the best choice. After considerable thought, I have come to the conclusion that Susan Cooper would be a better select board member than I would be. Therefore, I have removed myself from consideration—and I am asking the people who supported my candidacy to now support Susan.

As I turn my attention to help others as they seek office, I am also supporting Katrina Fitzpatrick for finance committee. Katrina is a college graduate with a major in finance, and four years of banking experience. She would undoubtedly be a valuable addition to the committee.

Votes for Susan Cooper and Katrina Fitzpatrick are important first steps to improve our town's government.

—Hillel M Maximon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Letters

The Finance Committee

Last year, after many years away from town government, I was intrigued enough by an article in the *Monterey News* written by a member of the finance committee to decide to run upon the end of George Cain's term. I attended a number of budget meetings where, as is usual, town departments presented their requests. The gist of the article, as I recall, was that as a town we have the power to stem the rise in tax rates and actively keep spending in line with that goal.

Easier said than done but the goal of producing a budget is paramount.

While I am by no means an expert, I do appreciate the importance of numbers and facts in evaluating and making the case for the budget we craft. Another essential part of drafting a budget is the collaboration, cooperation, and consensus, which is stressed repeatedly in state-issued guidance for finance committees and select boards. So while expertise and experience are of great value, the ability to work together to produce the best results for the town in the present and for the future are also essential. As a small town, Monterey relies heavily on the goodwill and patience of volunteers to keep the wheels turning. It will come as no surprise when I say that this year's budget deliberations were especially difficult in that regard. While we had the benefit of expertise, we were often caught up in discussing matters outside the budget. In the end, we seem to have reached consensus on most of the budget items.

This year we will have new residents willing to volunteer their time and experience to town offices.

Happily younger folks than I are willing to bring new energy and a willingness to learn to the jobs.

I will be supporting Katrina Fitzpatrick for the finance committee.

—Michele Miller

Candidate Forum

In lieu of holding an in-person forum this year, I have opted for posing questions for written responses. To build a body of questions I contacted over a dozen townspeople who have been active in town affairs. I received more than thirty suggested questions or topics. I worked to identify themes and develop focused questions.

Most of the questions would apply to both the select board and finance committee seats, but I decided to have some shared questions and some questions directed to the particular office. I am hopeful that this approach will yield a broader vision for the future of the town.

I asked the candidates to respond to two or three of the shared questions, and two or three of the questions for the office.

—Stephen Moore

Shared Questions for Both Offices

Future: Monterey is in an enviable situation—level of services, capacity of town departments to do their work, new transfer station, library, and community center, etc., with a low tax rate and manageable debt load compared to the rest of the county and the state. What are challenges facing the town in the next three to five years?

Stabilization: The stabilization fund cushions the town for unanticipated and larger capital expenses. Appropriating money for stabilization raises the tax rate. What do you think is a sustainable proportion of appropriations for the stabilization fund as part of the overall town budget?

Police and Fire Services: Given the escalating costs and difficulty attracting qualified candidates, what are your thoughts on a regionalized approach to fire and/or police service?

Roles: What are the proper roles for the select board and the finance committee for developing and presenting the annual budget?

Finance Committee Questions

Budget Burden: Some complain our budget is not appropriate for the size of the town. What budget areas (income or expenses) should be increased or decreased?

Lake Garfield Tax District: A Lake Garfield tax district has been proposed for lake district properties to bear the cost of maintaining the health of the lake, similar to Lake Buel tax district. In recent years the town has funded activities around lake health. How should lake health activities be funded?

PILOT: Non-profit properties do not pay town real estate taxes. What are your thoughts about Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) in Monterey?

Transfer Station: The transfer station is a successful asset for the town, but it costs $50,000 more than budgeted. How should we adjust the revenue raised through taxes, sticker cost, and fees?

Rebecca Wolin - Finance

Shared Questions

Police and Fire Services: For our police services I don't feel we have any difficulty attracting qualified candidates and the police budgets have not escalated over the years. Our police force has two outstanding officers who know the residents and are doing a great job. I see no reason to regionalize the police services. The fire chiefs have been stating that they have had trouble attracting qualified candidates. I am not sure what they are doing to recruit new members and I have not seen the data to show that Monterey has a harder time than other towns attracting new members. Monterey was the first town to pay their volunteer fire department for fire calls and training. Monterey has always funded their fire department with the up-to-date equipment and training. We are now paying for members of the fire department to sleep over at night so they can respond quicker to calls. This may be an area where regionalization may make sense as the Monterey fire department has on occasion been the first to respond to other towns alarms. It would be nice if we could be reimbursed by those towns rather than the agreement we have now (mutual aid) which is to go help if needed without any reimbursement. I do not think Monterey should rely on other towns for our own needs as we also have an excellent fire department.

Roles: The Massachusetts Department of Revenue states that town finance committees have three jobs they are responsible for: prepare and present a budget at town meeting, monitor expenditures against appropriated funds, and approve transfers when there are small budget overruns. The town's bylaws state the same. The finance committee is unpaid and independently elected. The finance committee has a fiduciary responsibility to the residents of the town. The select board makes policy and manages the business of the town. The select board and the finance committee need to work cooperatively with each other on behalf of the town residents in preparing and presenting a budget. In the past, the two committees worked together and both boards compromised on different budget items and in the end presented a fair budget at town meeting. This year the select board has gotten away from this model and I feel the residents of Monterey have lost out on a process that had been working previously.

Finance Committee Questions

Budget Burden: I do not think Monterey is much different than other towns when it comes to concerns on budgetary spending. With more regulations and a growing list of state and federal mandates, many town government positions require specialized knowledge. In some areas it may be financially prudent to split services with the other towns as we now do with our public school system. I believe the biggest burden to our budget will be excess borrowing. This year the select board has been suggesting that the easiest way to keep our tax rate artificially low is to take out ten-or-twenty year loans and bonds on our purchases and basically kick the problem down the road. I feel this is a very bad financial move for Monterey and will lead to out-of-control tax rates in future years.

Transfer Station: Monterey's transfer station is the envy of Berkshire County. Many towns have residents pay per bag as a user fee for the transfer station. Monterey has an annual fee for the transfer station permit which is set by the select board not the finance committee. I personally feel the fees are very reasonable.

—Rebecca Wolin

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Please refer to the "Shared Questions" on page 16, and the "Finance Committee Questions" on page 17.

Katrina Fitzpatrick - Finance

Shared Questions

Future: For Monterey to continue having an enviable situation, we as a community need to maintain the environment, and continue to grow a younger, diverse population which will allow Monterey to flourish. The next few years may be difficult due to the current negative energy environments created when making important decisions for Monterey. To keep Monterey enviable, we need to work together and always put Monterey's best interest first.

Police/Fire Services: I believe we need to look into regionalization more. While it may not save Monterey money in the end, it will help us fulfill and satisfy the needs of each department. We need to attract younger and enthusiastic individuals to participate. I will always look for what is best for Monterey and the budget. All in all, regionalization may not be easy, and may not be an inexpensive route, but due to the current community statistics, it may be our only option to keep our emergency departments functioning at their best.

Roles: Our main job is to keep the town's best interest in mind, and always base decisions on what is best for Monterey. We need to remove our own individual wishes from the decision process. As a small community, we need to keep our town in an enviable situation, which it has been for forty-plus years, but to do so, we need to focus on Monterey's needs, and not our own.

Finance Committee Questions

Budget Burden: When making decisions on where money should be allocated, or reverted, we take a look at each department's budget. Some may have excess funds, and if they have had excess funds year after year, maybe we could allocate those funds to another department that may run short, or may have more needs where the additional funds will be beneficial to their services. Are you happy with the services of every department in Monterey? If not, and you would like to see more done, then we will need to allocate the funds to the departments which may need improvements to provide even better services to the town.

Lake Garfield: As a new finance committee member I would consider it my role to survey the views of taxpayers both in and out of a proposed tax district and make a decision that is best for the town overall. As a member of the Lake Buel tax district, I know the lake has been thriving for years, and I believe the same could happen with Lake Garfield.

PILOT: Overall, the nonprofit properties in Monterey use the roads and town services just as much as the taxpayers in the town, so I believe PILOT would be a good idea and extremely beneficial to Monterey.

Transfer Station: This year there was an increase in the transfer station spending due to the pandemic. More people being home in Monterey, resulting in more garbage being disposed. More garbage comes with greater expense. We can adjust the revenue by raising the sticker price per person, but I would also like to do some research and see what other options we have as well. Not everyone in Monterey uses the transfer station, so I don't believe we should raise the overall tax. Possibly looking into new recycling processes may be beneficial, or as I said before raising the sticker fee, as it is currently quite low compared to other towns in Berkshire County. I would be open for discussion on what individuals believe could be some great ideas as well.

I am new and have been talking to key players in Monterey to try and understand the issues, but I still have a lot to learn, so I will continue to gather information to inform my opinions.

Thank you,

—Katrina Fitzpatrick

Select Board Questions.

Schools: The school budget represents the largest part of our total budget. Efforts are now underway exploring a larger regional school district. How should the town be involved and stay informed about school issues?

Recall Bylaw: Do you think it is necessary for the town to adopt a recall bylaw for the removal of elected town officials?

Climate Preparedness: Climate change has become more pervasive and concerning in recent years. What steps should the town take to prepare for the most detrimental impacts?

Housing: Should the town be active in developing affordable and senior housing? How would we best go about doing that?

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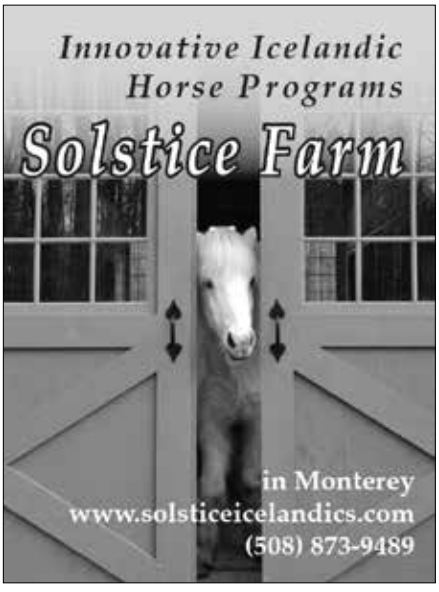

Susan Cooper - Select Board

Shared Questions

Police and Fire Services: As we have learned with the regionalization of schools, the devil is always in the details. Staffing, training and the cost of maintaining these services will continue to be a significant challenge—one which will require a great deal of creativity and careful planning. Our diffuse population and meandering roads make effective centralization difficult. The town will have to move forward with great discretion to be sure that as we proceed we neither carry an unfair economic burden, nor seriously compromise response time. EMS, fire, and police that arrive too late are a tragedy best avoided.

Roles: The select board (SB) is the town's chief executive body. They have overall responsibility for the general operations of town government. They set policy, dealing with current issues, but planning with a long range approach. They are charged with overseeing the various departments and boards, determining the best overall course of action for the town, entering into contracts, taking an active role in the financial management of the town, and bringing major issues to the town as a whole.

The finance committee's (FC) role has been to work cooperatively with all of the departments and boards to craft a prudent and transparent budget that meets both the obligations and the needs of the town. The FC should act as both a sounding board and a watchdog as the budget process moves forward. This should not be an adversarial process! Cooperative communication between the SB, the FC, and the town administrator is essential. When the SB and FC have fundamental differences of opinion on the role of town government and provision of essential services there are bound to be conflicts. But democracy requires civil discourse. We need to be able to discuss the issues at hand and find ways to navigate disagreements.

Select Board Questions

Schools: As Monterey is well aware, regionalization poses many challenges but declining enrollments and soaring capital and operating costs are making the reality of further district mergers ever more likely. Cooperative agreements are fraught with compromise, and this process will be both difficult and contentious, requiring creative thinkers and careful planners. At present I believe the working group from the eight towns involved (SBRSD and BHRSD) includes members of the towns' select boards and finance committees. I think we need to be getting regular reports from our representatives about the status of this discussion. This is a very complicated project and it will take dedicated, focused people to find a good way forward that will work for Monterey.

Recall ByLaw: Elected positions are an important hallmark of democracy, and I believe most positions in Monterey should be elected rather than appointed. Some jobs are sufficiently critical that waiting until that individual is up for reelection should they neglect their duties is untenable. That said, a recall bylaw has the potential to become a popularity contest rather than an accountability measure. We should work with a Human Resources firm to craft sensible job descriptions for *all* of the jobs in town hall, elected, appointed, or hired. Good job descriptions provide both security and accountability. They identify important job duties and allow us to evaluate if an elected official or employee is fulfilling those duties and meeting critical job functions. A recall bylaw that drew on an evaluation of an official's failure to fulfill their role might enable us to ensure timely accountability of elected officials.

Housing: I think most seniors would strongly prefer to remain in their own homes. The select board has worked with TRI to get a block grant for $40,000 forgivable loans for home repair for qualifying residents. This is an amazing opportunity, and dovetailing that with volunteers willing to help do the labor might help this money go farther. Meanwhile, the precipitous rise in property values, while a boon to some homeowners, is having problematic effects in our town. Owning a home here has become impossible for many hardworking local residents, the young families we need to keep our town healthy and vibrant. We need to find creative ways to provide housing opportunities for people who live and work in the Berkshires. I have some concrete ideas about this but they simply won't fit here! We need to scrutinize the impact short term rentals are having on the town and how we might moderate these problems.

—Susan Cooper

Town Elections - Candidate Forum

Please refer to the "Shared Questions" on page 16, and the "Select Board Questions" on page 18.

Justin Makuc - Select Board

Shared Questions

Roles: According to my rudimentary understanding of Massachusetts General Law regarding the roles of the select board and the finance committee in the budget-making process, there is no one "proper" budget process. Instead, vague and ambiguous parts of the law allow towns with both bodies some freedom to determine their own policy and procedure. My sense is that the best process for Monterey would significantly involve both the executive authority of the select board as well as the fiscal watchdog of the finance committee because they represent two different—and similarly important—perspectives. I think that the most crucial aspect of our budget process going forward is that the select board and finance committee mutually agree on a regular process that works for Monterey, so that the focus each year can be on the budget rather than on the power struggle.

Police & Fire Services: For as long as I'm aware, the fire department has provided quality and speedy service to our town. I am also aware that Monterey's fire service and those of our neighboring towns have seen declining numbers of volunteers as the population ages and more people are retiring than joining. I am hopeful that going forward we can be open to creative solutions in order to continue to provide quick response times and professional service. From my limited understanding of this issue at the moment, regionalization—even with the added difficulty of cooperation between towns—appears to be a potential solution for the future. *(Justin has been a member of the Monterey Fire Company for nine years.)*

Select Board Questions

Recall Bylaw: I think accountability of our elected officials is important, but I fear that enacting a recall bylaw at the current time may lead to more harm than good. I am aware that recalls have been used on occasion throughout history to remove legitimately elected officials who voice dissenting opinions. Such usage of a recall has the potential to factionalize our town politics. I am, however, open to the idea that the right recall bylaw, with a high bar for being used, could benefit our town politics. For the time being, I think our elected officials should continue to be held accountable through regular election.

Housing: It bothers me to know that there are long-time contributing members of our town who had to leave our community when they reached older age due to the lack of affordable, accessible senior housing in Monterey. I am aware of previous efforts looking into such housing, and I understand that it is an incredible logistical feat to plan, build, and maintain housing in a way that maintains the character of our town and fulfills the needs of seniors. But I think that caring for our seniors is a cause worth the effort. At the least, I think we should feel out public support and reach out to organizations like Construct to see what grant money may be available.

—Justin Makuc

In My View

Our New Town Administrator

On March 1 the select board hired Melissa Noe as the Monterey Town Administrator. While this appointment may come as a surprise to some people, the fact is that she has been working in this capacity for many years, albeit without the title.

Melissa has been the face of town hall for fifteen years. Rain or snow, good times or bad, prosperity or pandemic, she is the person who we have relied upon when we need answers or direction.

It is this consistency, this dedication to Monterey, that makes her promotion to this post a logical and positive choice for our town.

There are downsides to being such a public face in a small town for fifteen years. Some folks do not like Melissa. That is understandable. Melissa's job is (sometimes) to say "No," or to answer inquiries with, "You can't do that." She does it quite well. (My first encounter with her ended with a "No.") It is part of her job to inform the public of the limitations of their requests. Saying "No" is sometimes necessary, but it doesn't make you too popular.

Quite frankly, I had mixed feelings about working with her when I joined the Monterey Select Board. I decided that I would put aside the gossip and innuendo, and try to build a working relationship.

Here is what I have learned working with her for over six years—

Melissa is a hardworking individual who has a textbook understanding of municipal government. She can be relied upon to accomplish the tasks needed for Monterey, and has demonstrated a willingness to learn

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Monterey Community Center

A year ago this month we were in full lockdown mode and busy trying to see if we could salvage any summer programs. We spent the next few months plotting out what we could do outside and under the tent if we could gather at all safely. Closing for a few weeks was rapidly turning into closing for a few months or much longer. We would eventually figure out that, yes, we could safely have some groups and meetings outside, socially distant and masked, and that the tent gave us another landmark and a safe place to come together. In the spring we brought back yoga outside and then in the summer we had some drumming, Tai Chi, jewelry making, a history talk, and various demonstrations.

We were grateful that we could learn how to join in on Zoom meetings, and then, how to host Zoom. We recently enjoyed Liz Maschmeyer teaching us remotely about food dehydration, and Karen Shreefter exploring her tips on flower garden design. The perfect antidote to February weather.

The large white tent, thirty by thirty feet, will go up around June 1. For now, the plans are to have the tent from June through summer until the very end of August. Any plans are contingent on the Governor's criteria for meetings and recreation.

—Mary Makuc
Community Center Coordinator

new skills. Her desire to "run everything" is a common criticism of her, but I believe it stems from a desire to "get things done quickly." I have been personally impressed by how she has worked with our director of operations to help him and others manage the paperwork that comes with their jobs. I was also quite impressed with how she led the select board (and the town) out of the logistical nightmare of putting out a budget and annual town meeting in the middle of a pandemic. Many larger towns could not "get it together." Melissa got it done.

In closing, Melissa is not perfect; no one is. What I can assure you is that she has earned this job by working hard for Monterey, and I am convinced that she will continue to do so in her new capacity.

Congratulations, Melissa!

—Steven Weisz,
Member, Monterey Select Board

Library News

When we moved to the new library we added a number of physical magazine subscriptions, and you have been taking them out and enjoying them. Did you know you are not limited to the fifty or so subscriptions we have on the shelves in the library?

CWMARS recently added to its collection, and now has over three thousand subscriptions available for downloading. You can get to the collection by going to Libby or the CWMARS app. You'll want to make sure your preferences are set to magazines. Go to the "Explore" page and click on the "Guide Magazines." When you see one you'd like to try—click on it. The current issue will show. You'll have a chance to Borrow, Read Sample, or Tag, which has a few options of thumbs up or down, or putting it on your wish list. If you click on borrow, you'll be asked to do that one more time and you will have it for fourteen days.

For those of you who have borrowed digital content you will be very happy that, unlike books, there is no waiting list. The magazines are always available. You will always be able to have the current issue, or you can scroll down and borrow back issues.

There is another important feature that will make it possible for you to read them on your phone. Once the magazine has downloaded, you swipe to turn the pages. If you find an article that you'd like to read, it won't be easy to do that on a phone screen. However, at the bottom of the page there will be a button that says "Read the Article." Click on that and the article will adapt to your screen so you can.

So yet another of those benefits that we get from being a member of CWMARS!

—Mark Makuc
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Select Board Motion
Harassment of Shawn Tyron

Editor's Note: The motion passed by the select board on March 18 is not available through the town website as of this writing. If any reader would like to read the actual, email MontereyNews9@gmail.com, with the subject line "Motion," and it will be sent to you. To read minutes of that meeting, go to the select board page on MontereyMA.gov, and open "Select Board Emergency Meeting Minutes 3/18/21."

On March 18 the select board held an emergency meeting at the request of Shawn Tryon, fire chief and director of operations. Tyron expressed considerable concern with actions of Rebecca Wolin and Jon Sylbert which Tyron felt were directed at him. The recent attempt to file a criminal complaint of assault, extensive requests for documents causing both himself and Melissa Noe to expend hours of valuable time to satisfy, complaints that money has been mishandled by the fire company, have made for a toxic work environment and the board felt constituted harassment of Tryon by Sylbert.

The motion begins with, "Whereas two members of the Finance Committee, Rebecca Wolin and Jon Sylbert, have been following a course of action locally and at the state level for several months aimed at harassing and severely damaging the Monterey Fire Company, and undercutting its morale and creating a hostile work environment for the Company and Shawn Tryon…"

The motion expressed concern that "Sylbert and Wolin may continue to use their public positions and Finance Committee meetings to launch reckless attacks against Shawn Tryon."

The motion concluded with:

"Now, therefore, the Select Board, fully satisfied that there has been no wrongdoing by Shawn Tryon or the Fire Company, requests that for the good of the town Jon Sylbert and Rebecca Wolin immediately and publicly apologize to Shawn and cease attacking him and the Fire Company."

See Wolin and Sylbert's response in the next two columns.

—Stephen Moore

Finance Committee Response to Select Board Motion

Editor's Note: Below is an edited version of a 2,300 word rebuttal by Jon Sylbert and Rebecca Wolin in response to the motion passed by the select board. The original statement is too lengthy for this publication. If any reader would like to read the full version, email MontereyNews9@gmail.com, with subject line "Response to SB Motion," and it will be sent to you.

Initially Wolin and Sylbert respond that the "Monterey Fire Company, Ltd. is a private charity and not under select board jurisdiction. In his capacity as president of the nonprofit corporation, Mr. Tryon is not an employee of the town and we believe he cannot be represented either by the select Board or by town counsel."

"Second, charges of harassment and damages is a legal matter and not under the jurisdiction of the Select Board or town counsel."

The response to the section, "a course of action locally and at the state level for several months" includes a long series of communications (emails) with representatives of the department of revenue around the question of the fire company's filings of a form for tax exemption. "According to law, charitable organizations must file State Tax Form 3ABC each year with the assessors in order to be granted a tax exemption on property taxes."

The specific concern of Wolin and Sylbert is around a period of years when the tax form was not filed, or filed incorrectly.

"According to the Monterey Board of Assessors, the Monterey Fire Company, Ltd. did not file a form 3ABC for the years 2009-2017. Yet they were granted a tax exemption in each of those years.

"For the years 2018 and 2019, the Monterey Fire Company, Ltd. filed incorrect form 3ABCs. These forms are attached to this email." *(Details of the errors followed.)*

After the copies of emails with DOR and with the Monterey Board of Assessors, Wolin and Sylbert state, "We leave it to Monterey residents and taxpayers to decide whether our concerns regarding the actions of the Monterey Fire Company and the board of assessors—particularly as it affects taxes—constitute harassment and damages or the proper business of a finance committee—or for that matter, of any private taxpaying citizen."

Near the end of their response, to clarify the purpose of their inquiries, they state, "Finally, it's worth repeating that the purpose of our enquiries as taxpayers and members of the finance committee has never been to malign the Monterey Fire Company, Ltd. or its president. We are here to help the Monterey Fire Company, Ltd.—and the board of assessors—to come into compliance with the applicable laws."

The response concludes with examples of the various ways that Sylbert has been an active supporter of the Fire Company over his years of public involvement in town.

—Stephen Moore

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Council on Aging

The Monterey Council on Aging (CoA) applied for and received a grant from the Massachusetts CoA to encourage socialization for seniors. We are hiring one or two outreach workers to make home visits from now to June 30, and we hope to continue the program with town funding after that. (See the job opportunity on page at the right.) We have actually been working on this for years, and it's coming together, thanks especially to two of our board members, Lin Saberski and Ilene Marcus, and Melissa Noe, our town administrator.

Great Barrington Elder Transportation is a reality! Our select board has just signed an Inter-Municipality Agreement (IMA) with Great Barrington for them to provide round trip transportation to Great Barrington and occasionally to Pittsfield in wheelchair-accessible vans. It is $10 round trip to Great Barrington, and $15 to Pittsfield when available. This is underwritten by the Monterey CoA. They operate 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, and ask that appointments be no later than 2 p.m. in Great Barrington, and no later than noon in Pittsfield. They require forty-eight-hour notice. Call (413) 528-1881—you can leave a message and they will call you back to confirm.

The Berkshire Visiting Nurse Nancy Slattery will be restarting her wellness clinics on the second Thursday of each month, so on April 8, from 2 to 3 p.m., at the Monterey Community Center. Right now the maximum number of people in the MCC is nine, Covid restrictions remain in place, and there will be the large tent in June. No appointment is necessary.

Our foot nurse, Beverly Dunn, is making home visits for foot care. She is one of the few services that has continued during the Covid pandemic, and we are very grateful to her. She says she doesn't anticipate going back to a centralized location. The CoA contributes $10 towards her fee. Call her cell phone to make an appointment at (413) 446-2469.

Members of the CoA have been very active with the Covid vaccination appointment helpline in obtaining appointments for seniors. We are working with the board of health and other concerned citizens to provide assistance to those who are having trouble with the online process, which, admittedly, can be very frustrating at times. There will be someone at the Monterey Library on Thursdays from 12 to 4 p.m. to assist and provide information. There is information coming out about vaccinations for those who are homebound, and we are compiling a list of eligible people for when that becomes available. If you need support with getting vaccinated, please call (413) 429-4568 and leave a message with your name, phone number, and best time to call you back.

—Kyle Pierce
Chair, Council on Aging

Council on Aging
Outreach Worker

The Monterey Council on Aging is accepting resumes for one or two part-time, temporary outreach workers to connect with lonely, isolated seniors for approximately eleven to twenty-three hours per week. Compensation up to $25/hour, without benefits. Expenses will be reimbursed. This is a state grant-funded position operating from March through June 2021. Applicant must have a car. Covid protocols will be strictly enforced.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: outreach calls, in-home assessment and visits, virtual supervisory meetings, appropriate referrals/follow-up, and data collection and reporting.

Qualified candidates must have a valid driver's license, pass a CORI background check, have proficiency in writing and speaking English, and be computer literate. A college degree and experience working with seniors are preferred. The ideal candidate will have: knowledge of social services in the Berkshire region, experience documenting work and collecting data, and the ability to work independently and create rapport with seniors.

Please email your cover letter and resume to: Town Administrator at admin@montereyma.gov, or by mail: Town of Monterey, P.O. Box 308, Monterey, MA 01245. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

—Kyle Pierce
Chair, Council on Aging

A Big Thank You to:

Heather Barbieri Kenn Basler
Mary Makuc Roy Carwile
Kyle Pierce Mark Makuc
Kay Purcell Steve Moore
Lin Saberski Jim Wilusz

for caring for the seniors in the Town of Monterey, and facilitating their COVID-19 vaccinations. We were recipients of your kindness and generosity, and we are indebted to you. As they say, "It takes a village"—and we are very fortunate that we live in this one.

Janet & Hillel Maximon

Thai Yoga Bodywork

Local References *Sliding Scale*

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Parks Commission News

The Monterey Parks Commission, currently comprised of five elected volunteers, meets as needed to review the recreational activities offered by the town, as well as monitor the maintenance of town park properties including Green Park, Bidwell Park, and Lake Garfield beach. Among the topics discussed in our March 17 meeting was the recent success of the ice skating season in the firehouse pavilion, despite the challenges of social distancing. Much thanks are due to the leadership of Mark Makuc and Peter Poirier for enabling this to happen.

The subject of kayak storage across from the town beach continues to occupy much of our time as well as popular interest. Two additional kayak racks will be installed by the highway department to bring the total to sixty available storage berths. Details for permit applications will be posted on the town website with the intention of awarding spots by lottery by the end of April. Pending clarification from public health officials, we expect the Lake Garfield beach and lifeguard program to resume activity for the summer season.

Ongoing considerations brought forward by town residents include renovation of the playground, construction of a pickleball court, and the procurement and placement of an outdoor ping-pong table. We look forward to continuing the many recreational activities provided by the town despite the limitations of social distancing.

— Steve Snyder
Chair, Monterey Parks Commission

March at the Knox Gallery

Silver: Michael & Maureen Banner, which opened at the Knox Gallery March 19, highlights photographs of the couple's silver vessels developed over their decades-long career. Shown alongside drawings and plans developed as studies for the finished pieces, the viewer enjoys a glimpse of the artists' processes.

The vessels themselves are Michael's specialty, which he achieves through a painstaking process—creating curved shapes from sheets of sterling silver using hammers and steel stakes in order to assemble the pieces into hollow forms. Maureen focuses on fine details—enamel accents achieved by sprinkling powdered glass onto silver bases that are then fired to melt the glass. In her cloisonné pieces, she uses tiny wires to create dams, which compartmentalize colors.

Michael began his work as a jewelry maker while earning a teaching degree at Western Michigan. He took one jewelry class and loved it. He pursued making and selling his handmade jewelry at craft shows and street fairs in the Midwest so that, by graduation, he realized both that he wanted to seriously pursue silversmithing, and that he did not want to teach. Through the recommendation of an accomplished silversmith he knew, he enrolled at the Cleveland Art Institute, where he could learn from vesselmakers Fred Miller, John Paul Miller (no relation), and enamelist Kenny Bates. Only one problem—it was the Vietnam era, and Michael had a date with Uncle Sam coming up, a short nine months from the start date of the program. He asked the faculty and mentors to please teach him the entire five-year program's content as quickly as possible. At the appointed date, off he went to train infantry soldiers at Fort Knox.

After his military service, Michael settled in Chicago, continued with handmade jewelry, and kept a studio just around the corner from the studio of Maureen Arnow, whose mother, Edna, was a prominent mid-century potter.

Maureen, who describes herself as a jack of many trades (which she certainly is), had attended Northern Illinois University and studied with various artists, and primarily focused on ceramics. Michael and Maureen married in 1968, and Maureen decided it would be more fun to spend time working with Michael than to continue pottery, so she learned about jewelry—to the benefit of many of us! Thus began a very successful earring business. Her ceramics background became a significant influence on Michael's use of metal into shaping forms.

The Banners recall the 1970s as a bonanza for craftspeople. Shops took off, and "every craft show booked a lot of business."

A new horizon was revealed to the artists in the mid-1980s when Susan Morris, a friend of the Banners from Chicago (still a close friend, and now a prominent art and curatorial consultant based in New York City), mentioned an upcoming teapot exhibition in Baltimore. Michael leapt to the challenge, and "realized a teapot is a lot of fun to make!" That was the beginning of the Banner holloware specialty.

The step into vessels was also a superb business decision—the best craft shows received many jewelry-maker applicants, but few portfolios highlighted such dramatic pieces as you see in our Knox exhibition. And of course, once admitted to the craft shows, and with these grand items exhibited, we know they sold many, many earrings!

"It's been an interesting life," says Michael. "Looking back. Learning."

All Knox Gallery events are admission free. Exhibits can be viewed during library hours (see back page of this issue). Please visit the library website for current Covid restrictions such as admission scheduling. Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, 452 Main Road, Monterey, MA, 528-3795; MontereyMassLibrary.org/Knox-Gallery; facebook.com/KnoxGallery.

— MaryPaul Yates

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A New Path to Vaccinations

Most people are now aware that you can preregister with the state to secure a vaccination appointment. To preregister, go to VaccineSignUp.mass.gov.

However, if you have preregistered, another path opens up as well, if you don't mind going to Springfield. A system supported by Curative Inc., based in California, offers a telephone-based appointment service. Call them at (888) 702-9042. To navigate the menu, press 1 and then 4. You will get a live operator who will take the information necessary. The calling hours are from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For our three local, Berkshire County clinics, go to GetVaccinatedBerkshires.org. They will announce on their homepage when appointments will be available for signing up. This site has not yet been integrated with the state's preregistration system, and while simple to use, has been frustrating. However, our Berkshire County clinics have been more efficient and cost effective than the state-run mass vaccination sites.

Finally, to get appointments for homebound folks, call (833) 983-0845, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Within a month much of this should change as more vaccine becomes available.

—Mary Makuc

Veterans

There will be a vaccination clinic held on Saturday, April 10, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at BCC in the Paterson Field House. The clinic is open to all veterans, veteran spouses, and caregivers of veterans—by appointments *only*. The vaccine hotline to make an appointment and/or provide pre-registration information is 413-582-3110.

Letters

Dog Etiquette

One of the great pleasures of living in Monterey is that we have plenty of safe places to walk, and take our dog, if we choose. As a courtesy to the people who live on our roads, it would be nice for people to pick up after their dogs. Our roads are shared by children, and other walkers, and this "poop" washes into the lake and our wells. Monterey doesn't have a pick-up law, so we are counting on dog owners to be good neighbors.

Enjoy your walk and thank you.

—Gerry Clarin
Sylvan Road

Letters

Much Appreciated Support

I would like to thank Beth, Dave, and Ron for saving my day on March 10 at the transfer station. I had a flat tire and AAA was not answering my calls. After making several calls for help with no success, Dave, Beth, and Ron proceeded to change my tire for me. This meant so much to me, especially since my daughter, Teresa, had an appointment for her Covid-19 J&J shot that day, which we were able to keep. Thank you, guardian angels!

—June Thomas

Letters

Tick Season is Here

Dear Montereyans. It is worth reminding everyone that tick season is upon us again. Remember to take precautions when you venture out to prevent ticks from getting on you, and to give yourself a good examination when you return indoors.

—Bonsai Cox

Letters

Unseemly Bickering

I enjoy reading about what is happening in Monterey, the wildlife submissions, the community center, history, poetry submissions, etc. It's well done on those sections. What I find disheartening to the point where I don't want to pick up the latest issue is the sixth-grade style sniping among elected officials. Stop already! There's not a single report on a meeting of the select board that doesn't devolve into personal accusations. I'm sure there is no moral equivalency between the Weingold and Coburn factions. One seems clearly bent on being an obstructionist nay-sayer. But can't we just see that the vote was 2-1 and move on without the constant nattering? The *News* does a great job of encouraging people to get involved in the community, but I have to believe that enthusiasm for getting involved must be dampened by such unseemly bickering in the paper.

—Malcolm Griggs

First Love

She had never looked so real;
an apparition.

Her hair was unteased.
She had cut it shorter.
It formed around her face,
her black hair.

Her olive cheeks
were tear soaked.
Her brown eyes,
shiny.

How can a boy
leave a girl?

Her dress was white,
a high border,
crossed.

Her knees touched.
Her ankles splayed.
She had kicked off her shoes.
She sat on the edge of the bed,
inhaling hard.

I was torn, that evening,
to Portuguese shreds.

—Peter Shepley, 2001

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Building Biodiversity Right Here in Monterey

The blur of my pandemic weeks last summer was punctuated by pleasant weekly drives to the Helia Native Plants nursery at Sky Meadow Farm in Alford. Each Saturday, once I got there, I poked through the greenhouse, checked out the offerings, and selected eight plug-sized flowering perennials for replanting in a raised bed at home.

I had signed up for the Building Biodiversity Box CSA (community-supported agriculture) at Helia. For a set fee at the start of the season, I received a hemlock 4x8 box that served as a staging area for plants that could later be relocated and spread out.

It was quite fun. Over the summer the box filled up with a bounty of native perennials: lupin, native milkweed, black-eyed Susan, nodding onion, ironweed, columbine, orange butterfly weed, tall larkspur, purple coneflower, gentian, and others I don't recall. By the end of the summer, the plugs had all grown and flowered, crowding out most of the weeds that sought openings.

And I had a bunch of new friends. I don't remember all of their names, or stories. But I have another chance to learn them this year through a project organized by the recently formed Monterey Native Plants Working Group (full disclosure: I am one of the founding members) and funded by the Monterey Cultural Council. This is a small group, but we welcome anyone, of any age, with an interest or curiosity about native plants. There will be a number of opportunities throughout the summer to learn and help out. It seems like a fun way for kids who may have missed classes this year to learn more about the natural world.

The project launches on Tuesday, May 4, at 6:30 p.m., with a free Zoom talk. Everyone is invited, just send me a note at my email below to register. The talk is by Bridghe McCracken, the renowned (throughout the Berkshires and beyond) landscape designer and native plants evangelist. If you haven't run into her yet, be prepared: her enthusiasm for repopulating our environs with native species is infectious, well-informed, and renews one's sense of possibility in a time of so many daunting environmental challenges.

We have ordered a raised bed box that will be installed on some yet-to-be determined site at the Monterey Community Center. Beginning on May 15, and continuing through July 15, eight pollinator-feeding, full-sun, native plugs will be available for weekly pickup from Helia, the nursery Bridghe founded and runs. There will be a sign-up sheet at the library for anyone wishing to take a ride out through the gorgeous Alford landscapes and select young plants from those available, and then plant them in the bed.

With each visit, participants will broaden their knowledge of plants that are native to our area and learn how to support them. Once the plants get a good start in the box, we intend that they can be transplanted throughout town, seeding something of a pollinator corridor.

I first heard about the power of native plants to regenerate ecosystems, nurture birds, bees, and butterflies, and grow well in local conditions from Bridghe. But I really got hooked on how much could be done right around town at a talk by Julie Kern, another founding member of the local working group, and her husband, Frank, at the community center a few years ago.

The Kerns have an amazing property on Art School Road just off Tyringham Road. It wasn't always as beautiful or so full of life as it is these days; it used to be a degraded, hard-packed corral and pasture for a previous owner's horses. The talk was called "The Accidental Environmentalists" because the Kerns' journey into native plants began with the installation of a new driveway, which then required the restoration of a wetlands area which Bridghe oversaw.

The changed habitat welcomed a whole new community. "After the restoration, we started to notice the new abundance of so many life forms, including bees, dragonflies, butterflies, birds, frogs, turtles, foxes," said Julie. "It made us appreciate how much native plants are a vital and beautiful part of our local ecosystem."

The Building Biodiversity project will include a field trip to the Kerns' property and to another native plants garden in Sheffield. More details will be available in May, and we will be having an organizational meeting before then. But if you have questions, or want to sign on, or register for the May 4 talk, kindly send me a note.

—Janet Jensen,
janetjensen@verizon.net

New Town Administrator
A New Role

Happy April, Monterey Residents!

I want to thank the many residents who have reached out to congratulate me on my new role with the town. I would also like to thank the select board and employees I work with every day for their confidence in me and continued support in the decision to promote me to town administrator. I understand that the position combines the part-time responsibilities of a town administrator with my existing responsibilities. I am humbled and eager to perform the tasks assigned to me.

Over the last few months there have been a lot of discussions at the select board meetings with regard to the decision to promote me. Not all the meetings were pleasant, and I am aware that the board was not unanimous in its decision. Concerns were expressed that I do not have the proper credentials or that the procedure was rushed.

I started working for the town in July of 2005. At that time municipal government was new to me. However, I came in with fifteen-plus years of office and managerial experience. Over time, and with the help of some amazing and knowledgeable board and commission members, employees, and outside resources, I was able to learn the job. As the years progressed I began to appreciate and understand Monterey and love my job through good and tough times. Is this job without challenges? No. Do I know everything? No. Will I make mistakes? Most definitely. What I do know is that I learn something new every day. This position evolves regularly. Laws change, people in elected positions change, technology changes, etc. I am extremely fortunate to be surrounded by a great team running the town, and it is my goal to continue to work closely with all of them to offer the services the residents of Monterey have come to rely on.

The town administrator does not run the town; it takes an extraordinary team. We have one of the best highway crews in Berkshire County, a highly respected and well trained fire department, a police department that excels in small town community policing, an experienced and friendly town clerk, a building inspector who is firm but fair and focused on safety, a tax collector with a historically high collection rate, a superbly run assessor's office, an unequalled library and staff, a professional accountant and treasurer, a welcoming community center, and so many devoted volunteers on our boards and commissions. I appreciate all of these remarkable people and will continue to work with them to keep Monterey the fantastic community that it is. Will we always agree? No. But those disagreements teach us new ways to address issues that we face and often provide a better solution than originally planned.

I am confident I can perform the duties and responsibilities of town administrator. My formal education may not come from a master's degree in public administration but my undergraduate degree combined with over fifteen years in town hall has given me the equivalent blend of education, training, and hands-on experience. I plan to enhance my knowledge base, skills, and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job by continuing to take classes and workshops. I rely on a great many people internally and externally and I am not ashamed to admit that, it takes a village. I recognize that there are many moving pieces (people) that keep Monterey functioning, and that is what we should take away from this. With my new responsibilities I will make sure that we all continue to work together positively and productively to keep things running smoothly.

Respectfully,

—Melissa Noe,
Town Administrator
admin@montereyma.gov
(413) 528-1443 x111, (413) 854-4222

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." —Henry Ford

Bonsai Cox

Caption Contest

Well, we had a few entries, so the judges decided to publish them all—equal opportunity humor. Be on the lookout for images crying out for fun captions and send them along.

- Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil. —Robin Weiser
- "So what's for dessert?" —Bonsai Cox
- Two squirrels hopped onto a bar… "Seedy place ya got here barkeep." —Stephen Moore
- "Slow down. You eat toooo fast, you got to make the morning last." (Thanks to Simon and Garfunkel.) —Bonsai Cox
- "Freeze!! You're surrounded!" —Carl Hartman
- Two chatty squirrels were snacking in a seedy bar. The bartender asked, "Why the long tales?" —Wendy Jensen

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Ellen and Lenny at the site of their new house.

Remembrance
Leonard "Lenny" Weisman

Leonard Weisman passed away peacefully at home on March 4 surrounded by loved ones. He was eighty-seven years old. Born in Brooklyn, New York on August 4, 1933 as a child of the Depression, Lenny joked that his parents, Ann and Jack, could not afford a middle name for him. He grew up with a loving, large extended family, first in Flatbush, Brooklyn followed by Rockaway Beach, New York. He was a devoted Dodgers fan no matter where the team lived and also loved the Mets, no matter come what may.

He was a big man with an even bigger personality. He spent forty-plus years in his much-loved Monterey, with his loving family and beloved Berkshire friends. There was a lot of celebrating in his Monterey home, with family reunions, weekend barbecues, golfing, hiking, poker games, and Sunday ball games where Lenny pitched almost every game. Everyone knew his name whether he was frequenting the Monterey General Store, the Roadside, or the Old Inn on the Green for birthday bashes. As was his signature way, he went "full stage" for brunch, picking up everything from the Great Barrington Bagel Company with Bob, browsing at The Book Store in Lenox with Matt, or enchanting friends and family wardrobes from Casablanca with Tony. Lenny was always sharing his joy for life.

His life in the Berkshires began when he visited a friend in his single days and he soon became an integral part of a core group of lifelong buddies—Alan, Nick, Matt, Brad, and their families—to name just a few, for many decades. His love for the welcoming community transcended to his multigenerational family of children, nieces and nephews, cousins, and everyone who was a part of his life. In later years, he enjoyed weekends with his dear friend Ellen, which culminated in building a house together from the ground up with attention to every detail from Scott Jenssen and Bottom Line Builders.

In the fall of 2020, gathering to reminisce a lifetime of Monterey memories. Top row- Jake, Laurie, and Vicki Weisman. Front row-Ellen, Lenny, Samantha Weisman, and Roz Jacobs.

Lenny began his successful business career working with his father at H. Weisman & Son Lumber Company, founded by his grandfather Harry Weisman. He parlayed his work experience and contacts into Weisman Salvage and Surplus, and after selling the business, he came back with his lifelong friend and business partner, Skip Abrams, establishing Weisman Home Outlets, which continues with Skip at the helm.

Lenny raised two daughters Laurie and Vicki in Baldwin, Long Island, with his former wife Pearl Shapiro. In later years, he and his former wife Lynn Gladstone raised their children Jake and Samantha in Scarsdale, New York.

Lenny is survived by his beloved friend Ellen Kurtz, a resident of Monterey, and his devoted children Laurie, Vicki (Monterey resident), Samantha, Jake; their spouses Roz, Mark, and Zach; grandchildren Charlotte, Natalie, Stella, and Wes.

By his own assessment, Lenny had a great life. To all who knew him, he has left an indelible legacy of laughter and love.

Lenny was a larger-than-life character with an insatiable lust for life. His smile lit up any room, beach resort, or Monterey porch. The final chapter of his life was all about acceptance and appreciation of what a great life he had, laughing easily and joking constantly. When asked if he was comfortable, he consistently replied, "I make a living." He most certainly did in every way.

Donations in his memory can be made to the Memory Project Productions, Inc., whose mission is to promote social justice through art and remembrance (memoryprojectproductions.org).

To send remembrances to his family please go to finnertyandstevens.com.

—Ellen Kurtz

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Monterey News
Annual Fund Drive

A sincere thank you to everyone who has sent in contributions in response to the annual fund drive, or just because your spirit moved you to. Our annual fund appeal has been sent out, and folks are again opening their wallets to keep the *Monterey News* going for another year. We sincerely appreciate the quick response of those below.

Jean Germain
Scott Jervas
Ruth Rosenblatt
Carol Landess
Eleanor Gradziel
Amy Husten
Eve La Belle
Christa & Ian Lindsay
Stanley Lee
Peter Lauritzen
Philip & Marilyn Lombardo
Maurice Mandel
Ricki Long & Walter Corwin
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Simeon & Judith Brinberg
Richard Farkas
Elizabeth Wool
Ira Transport
Arlene & Frank Tolopko
Alice & Joel Schick
Michelle Scott
Barbara Adams
Clinton & Peg Burt
Ann & Alvin Richmond
Cathy & Buddy Rodgers
Rebecca Phelps
Lauren Paul
Laura & Tom Mensi
Peter & Susan LeProvost
Sue & Philip Knoll
Roger Kane
Susan & Norman Ladov
Cindy & Rob Hoogs
Gail Heath
George Emmons
Barbara & Mark Cohen
Darlene Balestro
Delight & Paul Dodyk
Lin Saberski & Bob Cutick
Tim Harrigan
Lonnie Solomon
Belvin Williams
Arnold Obler
Arlen & Jane Gelbard
Ellen Kurtz
Pauline & Henry Goldberg
Dorene Beller
Alan Rose & Carmen Tagle
Wendy Benjamin & Mayra Rodriguez
Joseph & Rhonda Daponte
Laura & Stuart Litwin
Rose Marie Johnson
Jeff & Rachel Dohanczyk
Barbara Emmel Wolinsky
Bob Rausch
Jane & Marty Schwartz
Rocky Greenberg & Susan Popper
Richard Pargament
Norma Champigny
Cait Ryan
Lois & Michael Storch
Leslie & Richard Roth
Virgil & Lis Stucker
Sue Schmerler
Alvin & Myrna Schneiderman
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Julie Johnston
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Ron Gunther
Traudi Chiaravalloti
Kathy Curtis
Claudette Callahan
Joan & Terry Wing
Stanley Ross
Joyce Lebewohl
Gene Bounous
Ellen Grenadier
Melanie Shepard
Karen & Mel Selsky
Ellen & Clay Dilts
Dennis & Diana Downing
Peggy Reeves & Gabe Small
Phyllis Cash
John Buckman
John & Linda Schweitzer
Debby & Mark Bauman
Sara & Jim Martin
Joseph Quagliata & Sheila D'Nodal
Gail Padalino
Gerry & Midori Curtis
Leslie & Curtis Paine
Michael Rood
Kay Purcell
John & Cynthia Makuc
David Shapiro
Richard Skolnik

Thanks to Roberta Weiss for her note about the Red Squirrel, in this month's Wildlife Report. Look in the May *Monterey News* for more on these little critters.

—Bonner McAllester

Wildlife Report - March

Otters, Bluebirds, Squirrels (Red, Grey, and Black), also Bobcats and More

Early in March Bob Carlson wrote in to say he'd seen a Mink bounding across Route 23 in Otis. Right about this time Ed Salsitz and Arrie Setiawati had clever Grey Squirrels outwitting the Squirrel Baffler on their birdfeeder. Paul DePreter wrote about a Bobcat at his place and said his neighbor up the hill, Tracy Brennan, saw one, too. It had a tasty rabbit in its mouth. Paul says all he was offering was bacon, eggs, and cheese sandwiches—not so fancy.

Cindy Hoogs reported Bluebirds at her boxes the second week in March, and Paul DePreter wrote about the same time to say the Bluebirds were checking out boxes at his place. He had cleaned out all six of them. Two weeks later Paul wrote, "Bluebirds at the boxes with a sense of purpose!!!"

Abby and Bruce Levine sent a photograph of a glorious Barred Owl (above), and we have been hearing them lately with all their remarkable variety of calls here on Hupi Road. Joe Baker noted House Finches at the feeder in mid-March, and Paul DePreter sent a photograph of a flock of about fifty Red-winged Blackbirds flying low past his feeders right about this same time (above).

Roberta Weiss called to tell of a remarkably red Red Squirrel spending the day enjoying suet and peanuts at her place on Beartown Mountain Road. She sent two photographs, blurry with action, but showing clearly this animal to be an excellent shade of red.

Keeping us posted on the waterfowl, Cindy Hoogs says that she and Rob have been seeing Common Mergansers, Hooded Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, and Canada Geese on Lake Garfield. Earlier in the month Mary Makuc saw three Otters on the lake, looking like seals as they slid into an open place in the ice. I saw an Otter much later in March, on the ice on Royal Pond near the Otis line. This was a big animal, and like Mary, I felt it looked like a seal out there.

Maureen Banner saw a Bobcat crossing Route 23 in a hurry, near Fairview Road, headed east toward Gould Farm. This was a lean Bobcat. Over in Southampton, Erik Jensen got a good photograph of a big Bobcat in the backyard (right). It was first spotted by his daughter Nara, back when the snow was on, and younger brother Emmett observed the big cat to be much like a Lynx, especially as it walked on the snow, with its feet spread wide.

Late in the month, we had a Goshawk fly by. The next day there was a handsome Fox Sparrow scritching on the ground the way a chicken does, under our feeder, and just before this we'd had a Black Bear visit, though we didn't see it. Two gates were knocked over near the birdfeeder but no harm done.

The last note I have for March wildlife, one warm morning near the end of the month, comes from Steve Moore and Wendy Jensen who were eating breakfast on their porch. They saw three Great Blue Herons fly by together, a rare sight, and wondered if there were a rookery being established nearby. We will send our scientists out to check on this, unobtrusively, and report back. Meanwhile, thanks for all your notes and interest.

—Bonner McAllester
528-9385 or bonnermca@gmail.com

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Bidwell House Museum

As I sat to write this article, I looked back at the museum's article from last April to get a sense of how things had changed over this very trying year. Twelve months ago, the theme of our April article was deep uncertainty but this April I can say that the theme is one of cautious optimism. People are being vaccinated against Covid-19 at record rates, cases are going down, and there seems to be a light at the end of this very long tunnel. For the Bidwell House, 2020 was a year to learn new things despite the hardships, expand outside tours so visitors could have engaging visits on their own, and encourage all of our visitors to enjoy every one of the 192 acres on which the museum sits. This year, we will continue down that same path while also being hopeful about seeing each other in person sometime this summer. Before I share some of those plans, I have to say thank you to all the residents of Monterey for your strong support over the last year! You attended our Zoom programs, hiked the trails and donated to the Annual Appeal. We could not do what we do without you! If you are interested in becoming a member in 2021, head to our website at bidwellhousemuseum.org/join/.

In 2021 the museum's virtual programs will continue, and for those of you who love our history talk lecture series, we will keep sharing thought-provoking speakers via Zoom. Whether we can accommodate some in-person lectures remains to be seen, but we are very hopeful. For socially distanced, in-person activities, the museum is planning a program called "Maker Days" when we will showcase some local craftspeople on the property, and maybe even host some live music. It will be a scaled-down version of our country fair, which we have decided not to hold again this year. We also hope to have some guided walks on the property and reopen the house for tours, by appointment only, sometime this summer. The one event for which we have a confirmed date is our reenactment weekend, Raid on Township #1, which will be held on the museum grounds September 18 and 19. This two-day program will include battle demonstrations, reenactments of camp life, and educational talks about life during the Revolutionary War. We will share more details about this event over the summer. As the Covid situation improves, we will continue to plan programs, confirm events, and welcome you to the museum property.

As we slowly work our way back to the semblance of a normal season, the museum is looking for volunteers! Are you interesting in gardening? Leading tours of the house? Helping with events or fundraisers? Each year the museum needs dozens of volunteers to help with all facets of the museum and 2021 will be no different. If you are interested in history, horticulture, or just want to meet some new people, please consider volunteering your time this year. Contact executive director Heather Kowalski at bidwelhouse@gmail.com for more information.

Finally, as always, the gardens and trails are open every day, year-round, free of charge for your enjoyment. Just be careful on the road as we make our way through mud season in the Berkshires, otherwise known as springtime.

Correction: In the March article of the *Monterey News* the Monterey Cultural Council included a couple of statements regarding the 2021 Bidwell House museum programs that were incorrect. The museum is so appreciative of the cultural council grants but wanted to make sure there was no confusion. Please note that Maker Days is not going to be an opening season event but rather a program in July or August. Nor will the Maker Day event have a pie- or cake-baking contest. Also, the reenactment weekend is a new program for the museum and not "back by popular demand." Check the Bidwell House Museum website over the summer for information about these events.

—Heather Kowlaski
Executive Director

Monterey News

The *Monterey News* is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions may be sent via email to montereynews9@gmail.com or to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. For advertising rates or other information, contact the Editor at (413)528-4007 or email.

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- The email address for the dispatch service is:

  dispatch@sdb.state.ma.us.

- Police dispatch service number:

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Contributions from local artists this month:
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Bonner McAllester, p. 29.

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